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The *Torah* Scroll as a Person and as the Sacred Source of Creation in Agnon's Narrative

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Abstract The *Sefer* (in many communities the *Torah* scroll is known only as the *Sefer*), the Book par excellence, has become not only the object that embodies the durability of the Jewish religious faith but also the place, the symbolic territory that has replaced the Temple and the real territory at a time when both have disappeared. In this article the *Sefer*, the quintessence of the Jewish identity, will be analyzed also as it is perceived in many Jewsh communities and in literature as a person, as a human being, male or female, a human being that deserves to be treated as pure and sacred. A perception that has been very elaborated in an interesting tale of Agnon, *Haggadat ha sofer* (The legend of the scribe), a tale that will be considered here.

1

Maurice Halbwachs ([1950] 1968, p. 16) has already pointed out that a religious group needs to refer to an object, to an aspect of reality which is durable and not given to change as institutions and customs will alter and ideas will move on but the object will remain as it is. Hence objects acquire an especially important status because they are destined to stand the test of time.

We know that in Judaism, the *Sefer* (in many communities the *Torah* scroll is known only as the *Sefer*), the Book par excellence, has become not only the object that embodies the durability of the Jewish religious faith but also the place, the symbolic territory that has replaced the Temple and the real territory at a time when both have disappeared. Indeed the Sefer has turned into the «place» of Jewish identity par excellence. What I intend to argue in this article is that the *Sefer*, aside from being the quintessence of the Jewish identity, can also be perceived as a person, as a human being, male or female, a human being that deserves to be treated as pure and sacred. A perception that has found a form of literary representation in an interesting tale of Agnon *Haggadat ha sofer* (The Legend of the Scribe) ([1919] 1978).[1]

This paper has been presented with slight differences in the international conference on *The Jewish Book: Histories, Media, Metaphors*, Venice, Ca' Foscari University, 9-12 June 2013.

1 See also the translation (Agnon 2009).

In the *Talmud Bavli* it is written:[2] «Rava said: How stupid most people are to rise before a *Sefer Torah* but not before an important man», meaning that already in the Talmud era the *Sefer* was honoured like a person, by rising to one's feet, while scholars were not considered worthy enough of such an honour.[3]

What is more, the *Talmud Babli* contains a further passage allowing us to compare on the same footing the *Sefer* to a living person, where a person giving their last breath is likened to a Torah going up in flames.[4]

If ancient texts such as the *Talmud* lead us to perceive a symbolism in which the *Torah* can personify a human being, current traditions widely demonstrate how such an idea has been implemented in a number of practices. Many examples show how the scroll of parchment receives the same treatment as a human being, often a royal figure, and how the different parts which comprise it are considered vital.

We might mention that the *Torah* scroll consists of parchment rolled around two wooden poles, called *ets hayyim*, the tree of life, the living tree, something in any case to do with living. The scrolls must always be covered just as we cover a human being and are uncovered only at the moment of reading, the time of unveiling and revelation, when nudity becomes necessary. The poles are dressed in precious fabrics and often adorned with silver finery. They are kept in a wooden case that opens like a door. The case containing the poles is itself wound in cloth and is dressed and embellished with a crown on top, as if it were a head to be crowned. The crown is set with *rimonim*, pomegranates, the symbols of fertility placed on top of the wooden polls, the *ets hayyim*. In the Yemen, the mantle covering the *Torah* case is called *guftan*, (the *kaftan*, the traditional male garment). The removal of the *Sefer* from the *aron* is greeted by the women of the Sephardic community with palms held out towards the *Sefer* and this gesture is accompanied with celebratory *yu yu*.

2

Harvin Goldberg (2003, pp. 93-98) has dedicated a short chapter to *The «Torah» as a person*, describing the great emotional investment in the *Torah* made by the Jewish *sofrim* (scribes). He reminds us how in medieval Jewish mysticism the *Torah* was seen as a pretty, seductive young girl, hidden in a palace and ready to reveal herself to her suitor little by little, and how mysticism is not far removed from human experience. As

2 *Talmud Bavli*, *Makot*, 2,2.

3 My thanks to Nati Kupfer for this quotation.

4 BT *Moed qatan* 25 a (cit. in Goldberg 2003).

Goldberg writes: «I have heard both young children and adults compare the dressed *sefer Torah* to a human person. Some suggested male figures; others mentioned female, such as a bride or a queen» (Goldberg, p. 94). The *Sefer* therefore can also be considered as a girl, dressed up in a regal manner but also a child.

In Sephardic liturgy there is a *piyyut* which is read during *Shavuot* and called *ketubbah*, a marriage contract. Here reference is made to the marriage contract which God gave to his people on the day of *Shavuot*, the day when the gift of the *Torah* in the Sinai is celebrated. This is a further reference which returns to the concept of the *Torah* as a bride, a figure with which one can establish a relationship of mystical unity, noted in cabalistic thought as *Shekhinah*, the presence of God in the world.

In the novel *Agunot* (Abandoned women) (Agnon [1908] 1978) the *Torah* ark, work of a gifted craftsman is considered like a rival in love by Dina, the young girl who is attracted by the artist and finishes to push the ark out of the window into the garden moved by anger and jealousy.

Goldberg (2003, p. 95) also highlights the custom, present both in North Africa and in Eastern Europe, of childless couples buying a *Sefer Torah* to donate to a synogogue as a propitiatory gesture to foster offspring, a theme central to Agnon's tale. The donated *Sefer* carrying the name of the sterile couple would constitute a substitute for descendents, a presence which will last even when the couple is no longer with us, a sort of symbolic filiation having its own identity and guaranteeing the continuation of the spouses. Goldberg also mentions the custom of some comunities to dance at the *Simhat Torah* celebration and hold in their hands both children and scrolls as if there was a correspondence between them as well as interchangeability. This is another motif we will find in Agnon's tale.

The custom of placing the *Torah* on the seat of Elijah during the ritual of circumcision has also been witnessed in certain Sephardic comunities and in this case it is a matter of correspondence between the *Sefer* and the male child on the day of *milah* (circumcision).

When a scribe ordered a *Sefer* to be donated to a synagogue, it was kept, when completed, at the donor's house for some time until the right moment came for it to be conveyed to the synagogue. It was over this period that the case to transport it was built. When all was ready, a full male procession was organised. Singing and praying, they followed the route from the donor's house to the synagogue. During the procession the men took turns to carry the book while the women shouted their celebratory *yu yu*, exactly as occurs in the procession accompanying a young boy during the *bar mitzwah*.

In 2013 the Venice Ghetto experienced a festival atmosphere marking the 'birth of a *Sefer Torah*' and its resting in the synagogue, when it celebrated the conclusion of the writing of the scroll and therefore the birth of a *Sefer* during the month of *Adar*, with a celebration lunch, dancing and live music.

In Istanbul during the ritual of *Tisha be-av*, a ritual recalling mourning rites, the *Sefer* is placed on the seat and not on the table; in other words it is placed at a lower height, thus echoing the practice of other Jews who stoop to sit on the ground as a show of mourning.

Once the *Torah* is deposited in the synagogue’s *aron*, it will leave its new home only to be buried in a cemetery when it has become no longer usable, exactly as happens with a human being. When the Jews from the south of Morocco left their small villages they made sure they buried in a cemetery the *Sefarim* that they could not take with them. It is as if the *Sefer* were subject to the main rites of passage which a Jew undergoes in life – those of birth, *bar mitzwah* (son of the commandments) and death.

3

In Agnon, the motif of reference to the *Sefer* or the *Sefarim* is constant, particularly in the tales, and the ways we find the *Sefarim* unadorned, old and worn or, on the contrary, new are often used as a metaphor of the narrator’s state of mind or the socio-political situation. In *Oreah natah lalun* (A guest stopped to sleep) (Agnon [1939] 1976, p. 14) we read (my translation):

> The *Sefer* in the hands of the officiant but also the one which the *maftir* (the last person called to read from the *Torah* during *Shabbat*) would read from had neither crown nor ornament. In fact the precious sacred vessels and the *Torah* embellishments in pure silver, the work of artists, had been requisitioned by the government during the war to make swords and spears and the *Torah* was left unadorned. The *ets hayyim* were sticking sadly out of the parchment and it was heart-breaking to see their faded colour.

In the tale *Im kenissat ha-yom* (At the Beginning of the Day of *Kippur*) (Agnon [1951] 1977; cf. Trevisan Semi 1995, pp. 33-41), the narrator gains relief from his misadventures only when, amidst the old *Sefarim*, he finds a new *Sefer* which he had tied with a strong cord so it could not fall and which he himself had written «for the elevation of the soul in days past»; it is enough for him to see this *Sefer* to feel pacified (Trevisan Semi 1995, p. 40).

Agnon’s protagonists wrap themselves in the *tallet* used to wrap the *Sefer* like in *Pi-shnayim* (Double) as if the latter and the protagonist were interchangeable in the sense that both are covered in the same mantle (Agnon [1939] 1979; cf. Trevisan Semi 1995, pp. 9-27) while the *aron ha-qodesh* opens and closes like the door of a house to allow entry and exit to the *Sefarim* those who come to pay homage and greet the one whose turn it is to read (Trevisan Semi 1995, p. 10).

The *Sefer* can also present an opportunity to express concern when the pratices surrounding the handling of the *Sefer* are not conducted correctly: «I saw that the *Sefer Torah* for the reading of *Yom ha kippurim* had been rolled back to front, the writing underneath and the parchment on top» (Agnon, [1939] 1979, p. 132) (my translation).

Let us see, however, how Agnon, in his long tale entitled *Haggadat ha-sofer*, expresses his own feelings towards the *Sefer*, as he gives free rein to all the ambiguity connected with this sacred object. The tale, written in 1919 and contained in the volume *Elu we-elu* (Agnon [1941] 1978) comprises eleven paragraphs. As Arnold J. Band (1968, pp. 109-113) points out, it returns to a theme which has already been dealt with in the two previous tales, *Toytn-tants* in Yiddish and *Be'era shel Miriam* of 1910, which both tell the story of a scribe who, after finishing writing a *sefer Torah* in memory of his dead wife, ends up performing a frenzied dance while holding in his arms both the *Sefer Torah* and the wedding dress.

4

The parallel drawn between between the wife and the *Sefer Torah* in the context of a dance of death will become even clearer in *Haggadat ha-sofer*. Here we learn of the hero of the story, the scribe Rafael, who is so immersed in the sacrality of the task of writing the scrolls and so taken up with the climate of piety and prayer that he is unable to love and have sexual relations with his wife. The two poles – love for the *Sefer Torah* and love for his wife – seem to lie in opposition to each other in the tale with no chance of compromise. It is what happens also in the novel *Agunot* where the young girl, Dina considers the *Torah* ark a rival to her love for the artist, the creator of the ark. It is the irreconcilabilty between the two poles which gives rise to the couple's infertility since they are unable to have children. Although it is not made explicit in the tale, the sterility making up the *leitmotif* of the narration is due to the lack of sexual relations between the couple. Irony would have it that he writes the scrolls specifically for infertile couples or those widowed (my translation):

> Every well-off Jew who had no children, may God the Merciful protect us, or who had been left a widow, may God the Merciful protect us, went to the scribe and said: You know, Rabbi Rafael, my brother, you know how we are and what our lives are like. I had so greatly hoped that my children and my children's children would come to you and that you would write their phylacteries but alas no, I have no descendents… (Agnon 1978, p. 131)

and Rafael the scribe would sit and write a *Torah* scroll so as to leave them

a name and a memory among the children of Israel. In this way the scrolls carrying the name of the donor would replace the child and descendency, becoming a surrogate child (Band, p. 110).

The tale recounts how greatly Miriam desires pregnancy, of the clothes she makes for orphans and the objects she keeps, such as the willow branch from the *Hoshana Rabba* celebration (during which the scrolls are removed from the *aron* and carried in procession) which when placed in water was known to save women during pregnancy or else an amulet to ward off sterility (my translation):

> Miriam had threaded the amulet with seven threads of seven veils of seven women who had witnessed their own children and their children's children and none of them had died before their parents. (Agnon 1978, p. 135)

Yet none of these propitiatory rites will have any effect if Rafael cannot have sexual relations with his wife. In a very fine passage the polarisation present in the tale returns. Miriam makes herself attractive to seduce her husband but then she sees the mirror hanging on the wall that reflects on the opposite wall the hanging *mizrah* (written text which indicates the direction that Jews in the Diaspora face during prayer) indicating the direction of Jerusalem and the prayer and this is a sign of the irreconcilability between the pole of love and that of the sacrality and purity which are vital for the writing of the roll (my translation):

> So she decides to make herself attractive for her husband but now reflected in the mirror appears the *mizrah* with its images and the two open-mouthed lions. Miriam recoils. (Agnon 1978, p. 137)

In fact when Rafael comes back from prayer and sees his wife in all her beauty in front of the mirror, he goes towards her (my translation):

> As soon he is standing next to her, there glitters His name, blessed be He, as a reflection in the mirror. Rafael stops and in holy devotion reads «I have set the Lord always before all else» and closes his eyes before the glory of his Name and for fear of Him. They separate in silence. (Agnon 1978, p. 137)

When Miriam, having lost all hope of getting pregnant, finally asks him to write a Torah scroll for them as well, Rafael refuses, stating that there was still hope. Miriam begins then to make up a mantle for the scroll, as Agnon writes, «like a woman whose hands are busy sewing swaddling clothes, miniature sheets and clothes for the baby» (Agnon 1978, p. 138), again making explicit the equivalence of scroll and child, whose birth requires

a baby's things. However Miriam, unable to bear the situation, dies in her prime. After her death, Rafael, who is compared to a gardener, begins to write a scroll for her (my translation):

> What can we liken him to? To an expert gardener growing splendid plants in his garden…Rafael was an expert gardener who planted splendid Torah scrolls in the world. (Agnon 1978, p. 139)

When he had finished the task «He wrapped up the scroll, raised it up high, dancing in great joy, and waltzed and sang in honour of the *Torah*» (Agnon 1978, p. 142). While he danced he was amazed at the melody which he had suddenly recalled and which reminded him of another melody he had heard as a child on the evening of *Simhat Torah*, the celebration to remember the end of the *Torah* reading. His memories took him back to the eve of the celebration, to the moment when the *hassidim* carried in their arms the sacred scrolls, dancing in great excitement while the children ran towards them, grasping the scrolls, clasping and embracing the dancers in an atmosphere of general elation. At the seventh round, when the cantor had seized the scroll and placed it on his lap, inviting the children to come and take it, Rafael himself headed towards the scroll. At that very same time, however, a little girl (his future wife, Myriam) who had thrown herself upon the scroll, smothering it with kisses and grasping it in her hands, had tipped a candle onto Rafael's clothing, causing it to catch fire. Here the author introduced a tale of childhood which had sunk into oblivion to lead us to the final scene, the climax of the tale.

Having narrated Rafael's bathing in the freezing river to purify himself before his completing the writing of the *Sefer* and being struck down with fever, Agnon writes the final scene which has Rafael delirious as he recalls Miriam's wedding dress and catches sight of the little bag of dust from the Land of Israel used in her burial. Rafael is seen wrapped in his *tallet*, holding in his arms the *Torah* scroll covered in precious silk cloth embroidered with the name of Miriam. In this story of love and death, of purity and impurity, of sacred and profane where there is no room for compromise, the tale cannot end but in drama (my translation): «A light enveloped the head of Rafael, the scribe who had collapsed to the ground with his scroll. And the wedding dress of his wife covers them both» (Agnon 1978, p. 145). Wedding veils and dresses, together with little bags of dust for burial, are the ingredients of a story in which a love too pure and sacred turned out to become mortal and barren, while the *Sefer Torah* replaces a child which can never be born precisely because of the excess of sacredness of the *Sefer Torah*. A sacred fire in the form of an omen, already presenting itself in childhood and introducing feelings of disquiet and anguish into the narration, prevents the couple from consuming their love, placing in opposition *Sefer*/sacredness/purity and marital love/profane/impurity. However

the *Sefer*, and also the contenitor of the ark as we have seen, can also take on female images and be considered as a metaphor for the divine presence in female form, the *Shekhinah*, the wife and princess of the cabalistic texts but also of literary writings. This tale could therefore also be read as a story setting two loves and two brides in contrast, and the difficulty in choosing the purest bride, a different take on the classic love triangle.

5

Band speaks of the presence in this tale of a romantic triad composed of love, creativity/holiness and death, which allegedly obsessed the writer from his childhood. In my opinion, there is indeed a triad but not between love, creativity/holiness and death, but rather between a mystic/sacred love, a profane love and the narrator/creator facing the fear of hybridity. The risk, but also the fascination, of hybridity, of mixing two genres, of facing modernity and tradition and the feelings of guilt associated with this fascination, as hybridity is strongly stigmatized in Judaism, is attested in the whole narrative work of Agnon as well as his wish to keep purity in the narrative, purity in the tradition, purity in the genealogy. This conflict is resolved in the story in favour of purity and sacredness with an added note of ambiguity represented by the fact that the writer dedicated this tale to his own wife, a dedication which we are tempted to interpret, as if the author is staking a claim to his main role as creator of *Sefarim*, of stories, in other words his role as a writer rather than a begetter of offspring. Hence it seems that we are in the presence of a literary model representing the *Sefer*, the book of Jewish tradition and Jewish identity par excellence as a sacred and pure bride, a source of creation and fertility that can not compromise with the secular world and who demands absolute devotion. In other words we stand before the role of writing as sacred and of the sacredness of the Jewish writer, a role that Agnon has very well embodied in becoming the sacred father recognized by the generations of writers that have followed him.

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Di generazione in generazione
'Almog Behar e la letteratura *mizrahi* in Israele

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Abstract This essay focuses on a very interesting Israeli novelist and poet of *mizrahi* origin, 'Almog Behar (b. 1978), clarifying the most salient characteristics of his works – especially the novel *Tchahlah ve-Hezqel* – and the main issues there discussed. In order to better understand the works of Behar. The first three generations of *mizrahi* literature will be discussed: from the «transit camp» novels of the 1950s to the new wave of the 1980s, up to today. By focusing on Behar, it will be explained how it is nowadays possible to rewrite Israeli culture and society basing upon one's family past and memories and, in so doing, open new scenarios for Israeli literature, as well as for *mizrahi* identity and Arab-Jewish relations.

1 I *mizrahim* tra storia e letteratura

A partire dagli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta del '900, centinaia di migliaia di ebrei provenienti dal Medio Oriente e dal Nord Africa emigrarono verso lo Stato d'Israele, sorto nel 1948. Le migrazioni dei *mizrahim* (pl. di *mizrahi*: «orientale») – costretti a lasciare i propri Paesi a seguito dello scoppio del conflitto arabo-israeliano, o perché spinti dal desiderio di tornare in *'Eretz Israel* (Terra d'Israele) e prendere parte alla rinascita nazionale ebraica – determinarono nel giro di pochi anni la scomparsa di comunità che per secoli avevano vissuto in modi più o meno armonici all'interno di società a maggioranza musulmana. Si trattava di comunità ebraiche molto differenti l'una dall'altra: dai più isolati e tradizionali ebrei yemeniti, passando per gli iracheni – molto legati al contesto socio-politico e culturale dell'Iraq – fino ad arrivare ad una comunità economicamente avanzata, 'cosmopolita' e in buona parte francofona come quella degli ebrei egiziani, o infine agli ebrei berberi delle montagne dell'Atlante marocchino (si vedano Simon et al. 2003; Goldberg 1996). Una volta arrivati in Israele, essi furono però tutti identificati come appartenenti ad un ebraismo 'orientale' arretrato, conservatore e lontano dagli ideali promossi dal sionismo (Shindler 2008, pp. 91-97). Dovettero dunque sottostare ad un processo di de-socializzazione dal loro milieu originario e di ri-socializzazione nel

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modello identitario israeliano dominante (Shohat 1988). Quest'ultimo era legato al sionismo e alla figura del nuovo ebreo: un pioniere (*halutz*) rigenerato nel corpo e nello spirito dal contatto con la terra dei padri e che, gettatosi alle spalle secoli di vita diasporica, avrebbe lì costruito un nuovo Stato per sé e per il suo popolo.

Si trattava di un modello identitario teorizzato da ebrei di origine ashkenazita e anche influenzato dall'esempio dei nazionalismi europei ottocenteschi (Laqueur 2003). I *mizrahim* furono infatti perlopiù estranei alle prime fasi del movimento sionista, iniziando a emigrare in Israele soprattutto dopo il 1948 e anche in questo caso – come detto sopra – spinti spesso dalle contingenze politiche di quegli anni più che da altri fattori. Tutto ciò portò ad una loro marginalizzazione, che si accentuò anche a seguito della decisione dei governi israeliani di insediare molti di essi in *ma'abarot* (pl. di *ma'abarah*: «campo di transito») e successivamente in *'ayarot pituah* (città di sviluppo) situate in zone periferiche di Israele, come ad esempio il Negev (Khazoom 2005).

Per questo motivo, e per tutta una serie di problemi di natura economica e sociale, già nel 1959 vi fu una prima reazione da parte delle comunità *mizrahi*: la rivolta di Wadi Salib, a Haifa. Poco più di dieci anni dopo, nel 1971, sull'esempio delle *Black Panthers* americane fu fondato il movimento *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* (Le pantere nere) (Shalom-Chetrit 2000; Weiss 2011). Da allora si è lentamente aperta la strada verso un maggior riconoscimento della storia e delle identità dei *mizrahim*, e il divario socio-economico e culturale tra questi ultimi e gli israeliani ashkenaziti sembra essersi perlomeno in parte ridimensionato (si vedano Haberfeld, Cohen 2012; Friedlander et al. 2002; Dahan 2013). Ci si è inoltre iniziati a chiedere chi siano i *mizrahim* e fino a che punto questa categoria sia davvero utile da un punto di vista teorico e analitico. Essa infatti, benché sia la più diffusa per indicare gli ebrei di origine extra-europea, a partire dagli anni Ottanta è stata da più parti messa in discussione. Sociologi e *cultural theorists* israeliani come Ella Shohat e Yehudah Shenhav, hanno sostenuto con decisione la definizione alternativa di 'ebrei arabi', a sottolineare le comunanze esistenti tra ebrei e non-ebrei dell'area mediorientale e nordafricana prima della migrazione in Israele (Hever et al. 2002; Shohat 2003; Shenhav 2006; Behar 2009).

Questo processo di revisione non ha investito soltanto le scienze sociali o la storiografia ma anche la letteratura. In campo letterario, già qualche anno dopo l'arrivo degli ebrei dal Medio Oriente e dal Nord Africa, alcuni di essi avevano iniziato ad affacciarsi sulla scena culturale della loro nuova nazione. Essi divennero però una sorta di minoranza interna alla letteratura israeliana, secondo un processo di marginalizzazione letteraria che ne ricalcava la più generale marginalizzazione sociale e politica.

Seguendo le interpretazioni dei maggiori critici letterari israeliani – innanzi tutto Gershon Shaked – per molto tempo e in parte ancor oggi, si è

continuato a vedere gli scrittori di origine nordafricana e mediorientale come israeliani portatori di una cultura differente dalla norma, e le loro opere come esempi di letteratura etnica, talvolta pregevole ma pur sempre lontana dai modelli nazionali (Shaked 2011). Se le opere di scrittori di origine ashkenazita erano da considerarsi semplicemente israeliane, quelle di scrittori *mizrahim* divenivano invece letteratura *mizrahi*.

Tentativi piuttosto riusciti di abbandonare la linea tracciata dalla critica più canonica, sono stati compiuti negli ultimi anni dallo statunitense Ammiel Alcalay, dall’israeliano Hannan Hever e altri (Alcalay 1993; Hever 2002 e 2007). Hever, in *Producing the modern Hebrew canon*, ha chiarito come la letteratura ebraica moderna fu anche, soprattutto in origine, «un fenomeno nazionale [...], un apparato politico al servizio della produzione di una cultura nazionale» (2002, p. 3). Ciò è evidente quando si pensi alla centralità data alla lingua ebraica a discapito di tutte le altre lingue parlate dalle comunità della Diaspora: lo yiddish e il tedesco, piuttosto che il francese, le parlate giudeo-italiane, il ladino o l’arabo (Harshav 1993). Quest’ultimo caso si rivela poi particolarmente significativo per le connotazioni politiche che la lingua araba assunse sia prima che soprattutto dopo il 1948 come ‘lingua del nemico’ e dunque idioma che non poteva avere spazio all’interno della storia e della tradizione ebraica israeliana – negando come nel corso dei secoli, da al-Andalus fino all’Iraq coloniale, molti e fecondi fossero invece stati gli scambi culturali tra mondi ebraici e mondi arabo-islamici.

Al fine di includere anche autori *mizrahim* nel cosiddetto canone letterario ebraico, sarebbe allora necessario ripensarne la storia e la genealogia – come ha di recente tentato di fare la studiosa Lital Levy – al fine di annoverare tra i padri della letteratura non soltanto intellettuali di origine europea come Hayyim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934), Yosef Hayyim Brenner (1881-1921) o Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888-1970), ma anche scrittori e poeti ebrei del Medio Oriente e Nord Africa (Levy 2009). Dopo di ciò, è importante chiedersi quali siano i tratti distintivi della cosiddetta letteratura *mizrahi* e che cosa la differenzi dalle opere di scrittori di diversa origine. Proviamo dunque ad andare a ritroso nel tempo fino ai primi narratori *mizrahim* dell’Israele degli anni Sessanta (Alcalay 1993, pp. 206-214; Hever 2006).[1]

1 A ben vedere vi furono scrittori in ebraico di origine mediorientale già nella Palestina del mandato britannico e dunque prima del 1948, per quanto essi non sembrano aver influenzato la successiva «letteratura del campo di transito». Penso ad esempio a Yitzhaq Shami (1888-1949), nativo di Hebron o allo smirniota Yehudah Burla (1886-1969).

2 Dalla «letteratura del campo di transito» al «ritorno del rimosso»: la prima e seconda generazione *mizrahi*

La letteratura prodotta da scrittori di origine *mizrahi* che iniziarono a pubblicare all'incirca alla metà degli anni Sessanta – la prima generazione – prende il nome di *sifrut ha-ma'abarah* (letteratura del campo di transito). Si tratta per la maggior parte dei casi di scrittori ebrei iracheni che spesso avevano già pubblicato opere in arabo prima della migrazione in Israele. Penso ad esempio a Shimon Ballas (n. 1930), il cui romanzo *Ha-ma'abarah* (Il campo di transito, 1964) è oggi considerato il testo inaugurale della letteratura *mizrahi*. La prima generazione di scrittori si soffermò soprattutto sui sentimenti di esclusione e marginalizzazione avvertiti all'arrivo in Israele e sulla profonda differenza tra la vita prima e dopo la *'aliyyah* a partire dall'esperienza del campo di transito, luogo destinato a divenire uno dei riferimenti memoriali imprescindibili per le comunità emigrate dal Medio Oriente e dal Nord Africa. Oltre che da Ballas, questi temi furono poi affrontati negli anni successivi ad esempio nel romanzo *Shavim ve-shavim yoter* (Uguali e più uguali, 1974) di Sami Michael (n. 1926) e in *Tarnegol qapparot* (Capro espiatorio, 1983) di 'Eli 'Amir (n. 1937) – scrittori anch'essi di origine irachena (Berg 1998; Rossetto 2012).

Se la cosiddetta *sifrut ha-ma'abarah* era destinata a divenire l'emblema della letteratura dei *mizrahim*, è bene sottolineare come già negli anni Sessanta e Settanta vi fossero intellettuali di origine mediorientale e nordafricana che avevano intrapreso percorsi più individuali. Basti ricordare l'iracheno David Semah (1933-1996), che continuò a scrivere in arabo anche in Israele – cosa che, se da un lato intendeva ribadire il mantenimento di un contatto culturale con il Paese di provenienza, dall'altro portò ad una circolazione molto ridotta delle sue opere, che non andarono mai aldilà della comunità ebraica irachena residente in Israele (Snir 2006).

La seconda generazione di scrittori *mizrahim* – vale a dire i figli dei primi immigrati e coloro che erano arrivati in Israele da bambini negli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta – iniziò a pubblicare all'incirca tra la fine degli anni Settanta e poi soprattutto nel decennio successivo. Essi si trovarono quindi a operare in un contesto socio-politico piuttosto differente da quello dei loro predecessori. Numerosi eventi di politica interna e regionale avevano scosso l'Israele di quegli anni: si pensi da un lato alla Guerra di Kippur (1973), alla storica vittoria elettorale – cui non poco contribuì il voto *mizrahi* – della destra di *Likud* guidata da Menahem Begin (1913-1992), che per la prima volta nel 1977 riuscì a sconfiggere i partiti della sinistra laburista e infine alla firma del trattato di pace tra Israele ed Egitto nel 1979 (Shindler 2008, pp. 123-146). Se a ciò si aggiunge da una parte l'emergere di movimenti di emancipazione *mizrahi* come le già citate *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim* e dall'altro la crisi del sionismo socialista e dell'ideologia del *kibbutz* nella prima metà degli anni Ottanta, si può facilmente capire

come lo scenario israeliano offrisse più margini di intervento anche per quelle voci che erano rimaste fino ad allora sullo sfondo (Silberstein 1999). A titolo di esempio, citerò qui due scrittori di origine ebraica egiziana che ben rappresentano le caratteristiche della seconda generazione: Yitzhaq Gormezano Goren e Ronit Matalon.

Gormezano Goren è nato ad Alessandria d'Egitto nel 1942 ed è emigrato con la famiglia in Israele a dieci anni, nel 1952. È autore di romanzi e opere teatrali e fin dagli anni Ottanta è molto attivo nella diffusione delle culture ebraiche mediorientali in Israele. A questo scopo ha fondato un teatro e una casa editrice chiamati *Bimat Qedem* (Palcoscenico d'oriente) e infine nel 2000 una rivista letteraria, *Ha-kivun mizrah* (La strada per l'oriente). È noto soprattutto come autore della trilogia semi-autobiografica *Trilogiah 'Aleksandronit* (Trilogia alessandrina), composta dai romanzi *Qaitz 'Aleksandronit* (Un'estate alessandrina, 1978), *Blanche* (1986) e *Ba-derekh la-'itztadion* (La strada per lo stadio, 2002). In essa si narrano, attraverso un originale connubio di autobiografia, storia e *fiction*, le vicende di una famiglia della media borghesia ebraica alessandrina durante gli ultimi anni di permanenza in Egitto e poi nei primi anni in Israele, viste dalla prospettiva del giovane protagonista Roby/Yitzhaq – *alter ego* dell'autore (Trevisan Semi 2008; Abramovich 2008).

Ronit Matalon (n. 1954) è invece una studiosa di letterature comparate, collaboratrice del quotidiano *Ha-'Aretz*, che si è imposta all'attenzione del pubblico e della critica nel 1995 con il romanzo semi-autobiografico *Zeh 'im-ha-panim 'eleinu* (Quello con il volto verso di noi), al quale sono seguite altre opere tra cui *Qol tze'adenu* (Il rumore dei nostri passi) del 2008, anch'esso d'ispirazione autobiografica. Matalon è figlia di ebrei originari del Cairo ed è ritenuta una delle voci più originali e raffinate della letteratura israeliana degli ultimi vent'anni e figura di raccordo tra essa e le letterature postcoloniali. Nei suoi romanzi narra l'esperienza di marginalità della sua famiglia, soffermandosi poi sui significati che assumono oggi termini quali diaspora, esilio e ritorno e riflettendo sul combattuto rapporto tra memoria famigliare e memoria nazionale (Miccoli 2014).

Anche solo attraverso questi due autori, si può notare come la seconda generazione, più che al campo di transito, volga lo sguardo al passato mediorientale dei genitori o agli anni immediatamente successivi alla *'aliyyah*, spesso coincidenti con l'infanzia e adolescenza degli scrittori e analizzati in modo attento e talvolta critico nei confronti dell'*establishment* israeliano. Questa generazione di scrittori *mizrahim* è senza dubbio molto più variegata della precedente. Con un linguaggio originale, essa ha rielaborato la perdita e il trauma subito dai propri genitori attraverso un procedimento che si definisce con un termine psicoanalitico *retour du refoulé* (ritorno del rimosso), vale a dire il ritorno della memoria di quel passato che la prima generazione aveva spesso tentato di nascondere e di non trasmettere ai figli, nella speranza che ciò facilitasse il loro inserimento nella nuova società

(Trevisan Semi 2014). Questo avverrebbe, sostiene il critico letterario Yohai Oppenheimer, attraverso l'identificazione con il padre e seguendo il modello psicoanalitico dell'Edipo negativo. Se la letteratura ebraica delle origini si era caratterizzata per uno scontro generazionale tra genitori e figli – e dunque, in senso lato, tra Diaspora e Terra d'Israele – i *mizrahim* sembrerebbero aver optato per un confronto più aperto tra le generazioni, permettendo alla seconda di entrare in dialogo con ciò che i primi immigrati avevano, quasi involontariamente e con molta reticenza, trasmesso (Oppenheimer 2012).

È evidente – come già notava Gershon Shaked in *Modern Hebrew fiction* – che la famiglia è da sempre al centro della cosiddetta narrativa *mizrahi* (Shaked 2011, pp. 258-259). Se Shaked aveva però visto nell'attenzione alla famiglia e alla dimensione autobiografica uno dei punti rivelatori della non piena maturità letteraria dei *mizrahim* e il lascito di comunità ancora avvinte ad una sorta di arretrato familismo, in realtà potrebbe esistere anche un'altra spiegazione. Analizzando *memoirs*, romanzi autobiografici e diari dell'India coloniale e postcoloniale, la storica Antoinette Burton ha sostenuto che queste scritture possono essere viste come «un perdurante spazio di testimonianza storica ed un'opportunità storiografica nel e per il presente», che trasformano la casa e la famiglia in un archivio materiale e, da ultimo, in un nuovo spazio politico (Burton 2003, p. 5). Inoltre, i testi di natura (semi-)autobiografica potrebbero essere in grado di fornire un altro tipo di conoscenza storica: una narrazione che non si basa sulla contrapposizione netta tra 'vero' e 'inventato', ma che pone invece l'accento su più sfumate 'tracce' memoriali e sui loro mutevoli percorsi all'interno di un passato per sua natura frammentario e discontinuo (mi rifaccio qui a Ginzburg 2006).

Tenendo conto di ciò, è a mio parere possibile vedere anche nelle opere letterarie dei *mizrahim* una sorta di 'archivio famigliare' che contiene una narrazione intima e pubblica al tempo stesso, attraverso la quale comunità ai margini dell''archivio nazionale' israeliano cercano di far riemergere e rendere visibile storie e 'tracce' di un passato spesso sottaciuto e che viene reinventato e raccontato anche alla luce dell'Israele contemporanea. Adottando questa prospettiva, diviene inoltre più facile capire perché, a distanza di molti decenni dalle migrazioni degli anni Cinquanta, la memoria e la famiglia rivestano una centralità anche per i giovani scrittori della terza generazione. Essi, in modi differenti ma al contempo connessi a quelli dei loro predecessori, sentono di non essere ancora pienamente parte del canone letterario e storiografico israeliano e cercano dunque di allargarlo e personalizzarlo, così da renderlo più aperto e inclusivo. Nelle pagine che seguono, analizzerò dunque quello che sembra essere uno dei più promettenti scrittori della terza generazione – 'Almog Behar – mostrando come sia possibile, dal suo punto di vista, rileggere l'Israele di oggi attraverso la rievocazione del passato famigliare e delle complesse memorie ebraico-arabe, aprendo in questo modo nuovi scenari per la letteratura israeliana e offrendo un interessante spaccato dell'identità *mizrahi*.

3 Un vento nuovo? La terza generazione *mizrahi*

È qui opportuno ricordare come, da un punto di vista meramente statistico, oggigiorno non esista alcuna terza generazione *mizrahi*: essendo nati in Israele, i nipoti dei primi immigrati ebrei dal Medio Oriente e Nord Africa non sono infatti conteggiati tra i cosiddetti *yotzei-'Afriqah ve-'Asiah* (immigrati dall'Africa e Asia) ma tra gli israeliani tout court. Eppure, la distinzione tra israeliani di origine europea ed extra-europea ancora permane e, aldilà di miglioramenti per quel che concerne lo status socio-economico, è fonte di profonde riflessioni e dibattiti. «Ancora non l'avete superata [la differenza tra ashkenaziti e *mizrahim*]? [...] quindi non siete israeliani? Che diamine è questa identità *mizrahi*?», si sono perciò chiesti i curatori della prima antologia di racconti della terza generazione pubblicata in Israele nel 2007 (Shemoelof et al. 2007, p. 7). E poi, in che modo quest'identità può oggi essere raccontata? Forse che per la terza generazione di *mizrahim* le uniche alternative sono «rinunciare [alla propria identità] e scrivere come 'tutti', o scegliere di rimanere *'edati'im* [etnici] e scrivere in modo folklorico» (p. 113)?

Con terza generazione si fa riferimento a scrittori nati dopo la metà degli anni Settanta, perlopiù nipoti, o in alcuni casi figli, di israeliani di origine *mizrahi*. Tra i più noti, ricordo Sami Berdugo (n. 1970), Shimon 'Adaf (n. 1972), Iris 'Eliya Cohen (n. 1969), Moshe Sakal (n. 1976) e infine 'Almog Behar (n. 1978). Ancor più della seconda, gli scrittori di terza generazione – termine utilizzato qui in senso innanzi tutto anagrafico – non costituiscono in alcun modo un movimento letterario, pur condividendo tematiche e in alcuni casi uno stile narrativo. Se, come si è detto, il passaggio dalla *sifrut ha-ma'abarah* alla seconda generazione aveva sancito l'inizio di un tipo di letteratura oggettivamente diverso dal precedente, oggi si assiste infatti ad una cesura molto meno netta. È però vero che alcuni dei giovani scrittori *mizrahim* guardano spesso con più consapevolezza e con maggior orgoglio alla storia delle comunità dei nonni e/o dei genitori. In alcuni casi ciò porta a studiare la lingua e la letteratura araba, la tradizione filosofica e religiosa delle comunità da cui provengono o anche a interessarsi con grande slancio ai propri coetanei dei Paesi arabi confinanti.[2] Altri ancora operano con originalità nel campo della musica piuttosto che del cinema: si pensi ad esempio alla cantante di origine irachena-egiziana Diqlah

2 Sembra essere questo anche lo scopo dell'appello in ebraico e arabo *Ruah hadashah/Ruh giadid* (Vento nuovo), lanciato in Rete ad aprile 2011 e sottoscritto da decine di giovani intellettuali e attivisti di origine *mizrahi* – tra i quali lo stesso 'Almog Behar – con lo scopo di esprimere solidarietà ai coetanei delle 'Primavere arabe' e costruire «un dialogo leale che ci inserisca nella storia e nella cultura della regione», proprio a partire dal «passato che abbiamo in comune con voi per guardare speranzosi a un futuro in comune». Il testo dell'appello è accessibile al sito: `http://972mag.com/young-mizrahi-israelis-open-letter-to-arab-peers/` (2014-09-30).

(n. 1973) e ai suoi ritmi a metà tra melodie tradizionali arabe e musica pop o all’attrice e regista di ascendenza marocchina Hannah ‘Azoulay-Hasfari (n. 1960) – il cui ultimo film *’Anashim qatomim* (Uomini arancioni, 2014) ripercorre la storia delle donne della sua famiglia tra Marocco e Israele (più in generale: Perlson 2013; Shemer 2013).

Dal punto di vista strettamente letterario, l’essere cresciuti nell’Israele degli anni Ottanta e Novanta – attraversata dalla crisi del sionismo e dalla Prima Intifada (1987), dai tentativi di raggiungere un accordo di pace, fino ad arrivare agli attentati kamikaze degli anni Novanta e Duemila, alla Seconda Intifada (2000-2005) e alla seconda guerra del Libano (2006) – ha permesso ai giovani scrittori di oggi di guardare con ancor più disincanto alla cosiddetta narrativa nazionale, operando in un’arena culturale molto vivace e già percorsa da quel processo di ‘deterritorializzazione’ del canone letterario ebraico iniziato perlomeno negli anni Settanta con Ya‘aqov Shabtay (1934-1981) e poi arrivato fino a scrittori postmoderni come ‘Orly Castel-Bloom (n. 1960) ed ’Etgar Keret (n. 1967) (su questo si vedano Shemtov 2005; Peleg 2008; Schwartz 2009, pp. 21-42).[3] Oltre a questo, alcuni scrittori – ad esempio ’Almog Behar – sembrano adottare una prospettiva sociale e politica piuttosto radicale che pone l’accento su come il percorso emancipatorio dei *mizrahim* sia ben lungi dall’essere concluso.

4 ’Almog Behar e la sua opera letteraria

’Almog Behar è nato a Netanya nel 1978 da una famiglia di origine irachena e turca. Ha studiato filosofia e letteratura all’Università Ebraica di Gerusalemme e collabora con varie riviste culturali israeliane, dove ha pubblicato tra l’altro studi sulla letteratura palestinese, sul romanziere Yehudah Burla e sulla cultura ebraica sefardita (Behar 2007; 2011 e 2013). Ad oggi è autore di due volumi di poesie, *Tzima‘on be‘erot* (La sorgente dei pozzi, 2008) e *Hut moshekh min ha-lashon* (Il filo scende dalla lingua, 2009), uno di racconti (*’Ana min al-yahud*, 2008, in arabo: «Sono uno degli ebrei») e un romanzo, *Tchahlah ve-Hezqel* (in giudeo-arabo: «Rachele ed Ezechiele», 2010). Nel 2005, ha vinto il premio per il miglior racconto del quotidiano *Ha-’Aretz* con *’Ana min al-yahud*, poco dopo tradotto in arabo e pubblicato sulla rivista letteraria egiziana *Al-Hilal*.

Rileggendo passi scelti del romanzo *Tchahlah ve-Hezqel* e di alcune poesie e racconti, mostrerò qui come attraverso un recupero della tradizione ebraica mediorientale e grazie al ricorso a figure letterarie e famigliari

3 S’intende il fatto che oggigiorno gli scrittori israeliani non mettono più necessariamente al centro delle loro opere la Terra d’Israele né utilizzano in modo esclusivo la lingua ebraica, come era invece quasi sempre accaduto dalle origini della letteratura ebraica moderna all’incirca fino agli anni Settanta.

del passato, Behar stia costruendo un percorso originale in cui cercare di risolvere le molte contraddizioni che a suo parere attraversano Israele e i *mizrahim*. Quella di Behar può definirsi come una letteratura ‘in transito’ – e uso questo termine richiamandomi proprio alla parola ebraica *ma‘abarah* – e in attesa di una collocazione. Essa riflette sia la lunga storia degli ebrei iracheni, e il loro profondo coinvolgimento nelle vicende sociali e politiche dell’Iraq moderno, sia le difficoltà delle migrazioni dei *mizrahim* e dei loro primi anni in Israele e le conseguenze che tutto ciò ancora comporta (Rejwan 1985; Bashkin 2013).

Tchahlah ve-Hezqel descrive la vita di una coppia di giovani israeliani ebrei ortodossi di origine *mizrahi*, che abitano in un quartiere popolare di Gerusalemme. I due, da poco sposati, stanno vivendo una difficile crisi coniugale, anche dovuta al fatto che Hezqel ha perso il lavoro. Ognuno dei due sembra vivere in un mondo a parte, che nel caso di Hezqel si identifica sempre più con la religiosità e con la poesia. Dall’altra parte, Tchahlah scopre di essere incinta ed ecco che ad aiutare lei e Hezqel in questo complicato frangente della vita coniugale arrivano il rabbino ‘Ovadiah e sua moglie Mazal – loro mentori spirituali. Sullo sfondo dei preparativi per la festività di *Pesah*, inizia così il tentativo di risolvere la loro crisi e di costruire una nuova armonia domestica. Su tutto domina la città di Gerusalemme, i suoi mercati, il contrasto tra religiosità e laicità, tra ebrei e arabi – anche simboleggiato dalla figura di Isma‘il, il fratello di Hezqel nato da una relazione che il padre aveva intrattenuto con una donna palestinese.

Piuttosto complesso dal punto di vista linguistico, ricco di richiami biblici e di termini in arabo, il romanzo *Tchahlah ve-Hezqel* presenta un mondo *mizrahi* che non è né quello del campo di transito raccontato da Ballas e Michael, né quello cosmopolita di uno scrittore come Gormezano Goren, né quello delle periferie povere e desolate di Dudu Busi (Perlemuter 2009). A differenza che in altri romanzi di scrittori di origine mediorientale, in *Tchahlah ve-Hezqel* la religiosità ha infatti una rilevanza fondamentale ed è attorno a essa che ruotano il racconto e la vita dei personaggi. Behar tenta così di riappropriarsi di una parte del patrimonio culturale degli ebrei del Medio Oriente che è fino ad ora rimasta nelle mani delle componenti più conservatrici di queste comunità ed è stata spesso evocata solo a fini politici – per esempio dal partito tradizionalista sefardita *Shas* (Kamil 2001).[4] Lo scrittore vorrebbe invece che la tradizione religiosa mediorientale fosse ricordata per i suoi tratti di flessibilità e adattabilità, contrapposta alla più rigida ortodossia ebraica ashkenazita, e che ritornasse a essere a pieno titolo parte dell’identità *mizrahi* contemporanea (intervista dell’Autore ad ’Almog Behar, 2013).

4 In relazione a questo, non è probabilmente casuale che il rabbino e confidente dei protagonisti si chiami ‘Ovadiah, proprio come il fondatore di *Shas* – nonché rabbino capo sefardita di Israele dal 1973 al 1983 – ‘Ovadiah Yosef (1920-2013).

Insieme con questo, al centro del romanzo e dell'intera opera letteraria di Behar sta il tema della memoria e del suo passaggio da una generazione all'altra, punto che lo accomuna a molti altri narratori *mizrahim*:

> Hezqel sapeva che ora se ne sarebbe tornato a casa da sua moglie e le avrebbe detto che dal rabbino ho sentito dire questo e quest'altro ancora [...] ché l'uomo, ogni cosa che la donna impara da lui andrà ad accrescere la saggezza del mondo, perché la donna è il fondamento della casa e del mondo ed ella trasmette le parole dei sapienti ai suoi figli e figlie, che a loro volta le passeranno in eredità ai figli dei figli e alle figlie delle figlie. (Behar 2010a, p. 20)[5]

Ma qual è la famiglia della quale Tchahlah e Hezqel, rimasti entrambi orfani in giovane età, aspirano a far parte? Forse che il rabbino 'Ovadiah e la moglie possono essere considerati loro genitori adottivi? E i palestinesi che Hezqel incontra per strada mentre cammina per Gerusalemme? I due giovani sentono il peso dei traumi subiti dai loro genitori e nonni e non riescono a elaborare una via d'uscita che non sia quella di un amore profondo, nel quale esorcizzare perdite e assenze che attraversano più generazioni:

> Hezqel iniziò a piangere e poi anche Tchahlah cominciò a piangere, tanto che egli le domandò ma piangi per loro? Piangi per me? Per te? [...] E lei rubava le lacrime a lui, e lui a lei e Hezqel disse [che piangeva] per lei, per noi, per noi che non abbiamo una madre e che abbiamo cercato tutta la vita di trovare una madre perché conoscevamo il prezzo di questa perdita [...] e noi siamo un po' come madre e figlio, come padre e figlia, come ritrovati e perduti, noi siamo tutto il nostro mondo l'uno per l'altra, noi siamo il prezzo di questa perdita. (Behar 2010a, p. 186).

Il passaggio da una generazione all'altra può compiersi solo in maniera dolorosa e diventando uno parte integrante dell'altra, finendo con il non distinguere più tra uomo e donna, genitori e figli. È difficile immaginare che cosa possa restare della memoria del passato dopo che essa passi attraverso un processo così tormentato. La risposta che Behar dà per bocca di un amico del protagonista Hezqel è in effetti piuttosto pessimista:

> Mio nonno ha abitato con loro [con gli arabi] e così era stato per generazioni, molte generazioni fino ad arrivare ai miei genitori. E voi [gli ashkenaziti] avete fatto di tutto per separarci, con violenza, con forza ed ora siete felici di esserci riusciti e però ci chiedete di dimostrare che

5 Questa e le successive citazioni delle opere di Behar sono mie traduzioni dall'originale in ebraico.

> noi ancora siamo legati a loro, che ancora potremmo viverci insieme. Ci avete preso l’arabo e vi diverte che noi non possiamo parlare in arabo con i nostri fratelli. Avete distrutto la nostra storia, ed ora avete anche il coraggio di danzare sulle sue macerie. (Behar 2010a, p. 225)

Con parole molto dure si esprime qui la rabbia e la rassegnazione di comunità che hanno vissuto un’esperienza di profonda marginalizzazione nazionale. Ciò che preme a Behar non è soltanto sottolineare ancora una volta tale marginalizzazione, ma piuttosto mostrare come di essa restino «macerie» e brandelli di memoria che però, nonostante tutto, possono ancora offrire una qualche salvezza. Gli israeliani di origine mediorientale e nordafricana non hanno oggi altro posto dove vivere se non Israele e chi pensasse che essi possano tornare nei Paesi d’origine – spiega l’autore – è come se mettesse in atto una nuova forma di esclusione e sancisse l’impossibilità per i *mizrahim* di essere parte della società che li circonda. Si deve dunque ripartire dalle «macerie», e da quell’«oblio» che per l’antropologo Marc Augé è da intendersi non come il contrario della memoria ma piuttosto come una sua componente ineludibile (Augé 1998), se si vuole davvero trovare un modo per diventare eredi di una storia così complicata e avere la forza di dare a essa lo spazio che le spetta all’interno della memoria nazionale di Israele.

Come accennato sopra, Behar – a differenza di altri scrittori di origine *mizrahi* – non situa Tchahlah e Hezqel in una periferia israeliana ma al contrario nella città che più di ogni altra simboleggia l’ebraismo e Israele: Gerusalemme. Egli racconta una Gerusalemme surreale, fatta di quartieri popolari abitati da ebrei ortodossi e da misteriosi *ginn*, di sinagoghe, mercati e caffè all’aperto.[6] Essa ricorda quella raccontata da Agnon nel romanzo del 1945 *Tmol shilshom* (Ieri e l’altro ieri) e che ancora una volta – con la sua mescolanza di musulmani, cristiani ed ebrei, ashkenaziti e *mizrahim*, quartieri nuovi e Città Vecchia – ci riporta alla complessità e alle contraddizioni di tutta una nazione. È interessante ricordare che proprio a Gerusalemme, nello storico quartiere di Musrara, erano state fondate nei primi anni Settanta *Ha-panterim ha-shehorim*. Riallacciandosi a quelle che erano state le radicali rivendicazioni di questo movimento *mizrahi*, Behar torna allora a raccontare quei quartieri e quel milieu di estrazione popolare, mostrando come a distanza di più di trent’anni i *mizrahim* non sono ancora del tutto usciti dal campo di transito, o meglio sono entrati – insieme con molti altri abitanti di Israele: dai palestinesi, agli ebrei etiopi e ai ceti sociali più deboli in generale – in nuovi e meta-

6 Il *ginn* è una creatura soprannaturale – che può assumere tratti sia benevoli che maligni – tipica della tradizione e del folklore mediorientale sin dall’epoca preislamica.

forici campi di transito che fanno riferimento a forme di diseguaglianza e ad una società improntata a modelli giudicati eccessivamente liberisti. Questi temi compaiono qua e là nel romanzo come anche in alcune poesie di Behar, finendo con l'unire in modi innovativi la questione dei *mizrahim* ai molti altri problemi che attraversano l'Israele di oggi. Ad esempio in una poesia del 2009, Behar esprime solidarietà agli abitanti di Shayh Jarrah, un quartiere a maggioranza palestinese di Gerusalemme Est, ricordando poi altri quartieri e villaggi ai margini di Israele o dove si sono verificati casi di espulsioni forzate:

> Ed una notte ho sognato: andremo a Shayh Jarrah per una protesta, | reggimento dopo reggimento di espulsi, e con noi marceranno gli yemeniti cacciati via | dal villaggio di Kineret, i profughi ebrei di Hebron del 1929 | gli arabi di Ba'qa, di Talbieh, Katamon, Meah She'arim, Lifta | e 'Ein Kerem espulsi durante la Nakba, i profughi del quartiere ebraico | espulsi nel '48 dalla Giordania, le cui case furono nazionalizzate nel '67 | [...] i mizrahim espulsi dal quartiere di Yemin Moshe [...] | per fare spazio ai pittori ed agli artisti, gli abitanti | di villaggi beduini senza nome del Negev. (Behar 2010b)

O Israele dunque diventerà un po' più «orientale» e inizierà a riscoprire il proprio passato, cercando una maggior interazione con il mondo arabo-musulmano, oppure – sostiene Behar – è destinata ad avvilupparsi attorno ad un processo di «americanizzazione» che col passare del tempo la allontanerà ancora di più dallo spazio geografico e politico in cui è collocata (intervista dell'Autore ad 'Almog Behar, 2013; si vedano Segev 2001 e Ram 2008). Da questa prospettiva, ben si capisce allora quanto la parola scritta e la letteratura abbiano per lo scrittore un forte significato politico e costituiscano un atto attraverso cui portare avanti delle idee non solo sui *mizrahim* ma in generale sulla società che lo circonda. Behar è anche per questo molto attivo nella società civile e in particolare nell'associazione *Ha-ma'abarah*. Quest'ultima è sorta nel 2011 e vuole essere «una piattaforma per organizzare azioni radicali che andranno da lotte a livello locale a Gerusalemme Est e Ovest fino al livello nazionale, da problemi legati agli alloggi pubblici per arrivare a tutto ciò che ha a che vedere con una giustizia più distributiva e con l'uguaglianza sociale, tenendo conto delle affinità tra le periferie socio-economiche israeliane e il Medio Oriente e delle lotte che si stanno diffondendo in tutto il mondo», ispirandosi – come in un certo senso fa anche la letteratura di Behar – «sia [al]la tradizione ebraica che musulmana, le quali ci insegnano l'importanza di puntare il dito contro l'ingiustizia e a lottare per contrastarla» (Ha-ma'abarah 2014; si vedano Monterescu, Shaindlinger 2013; Grinberg 2013). Oltre a quest'associazione, Behar, è coinvolto in *Guerrilla tarbut* (Cultura Guerrilla), un collettivo di artisti israeliani – tra cui i poeti 'Aharon Shabtay (n. 1939) e

Ronny Someck (n. 1951) – nato nel 2007 e che organizza eventi dimostrativi e letture pubbliche di poesie allo scopo di «ridiscutere valori di giustizia ed equità sociale» adottando «un punto di vista radicale e giovane» (Guerrilla Tarbut 2010).[7]

Lo scrivere inteso come atto liberatorio e un’attenta riflessione sul linguaggio e sulle sue valenze ideologiche sono senza dubbio altri due aspetti centrali dell’opera letteraria di Behar. Nel romanzo *Tchahlah ve-Hezqel*, il protagonista maschile, ad esempio, inizia a scrivere poesie e a frequentare caffè letterari di Gerusalemme così da trovare nella scrittura un rifugio e uno spazio per sé, impossibile da rintracciare nella quotidianità domestica. La poesia diviene per lui un modo per rientrare in contatto con il senso del sacro, cui avvicinarsi con paura e incertezza:

> E di fronte a me stava il padre nostro Abramo che ha scritto il libro della creazione, Mosè che ha scritto la Torah dal principio alla fine, Davide che ha scritto i Salmi, Salomone che ha composto il Cantico dei Cantici, il libro dei Proverbi e Qohelet. Di fronte a me c’era Ezra il profeta, ed Ester con Mardocheo che ci hanno dato i rotoli [dei loro libri], Yehuda ha-Nassi che ha redatto la Mishnah, Bar-Yohai che rivelò lo Zohar […]. Io sono un essere umano e le mie parole sono come polvere, le pagine di carta sono foglie nel fuoco […] Abramo, Mosè, Davide, Salomone, Ezra, Ester, Mardocheo, Yehuda e Bar-Yohai scrissero ispirati da uno spirito divino e per questo le loro parole sono eterne. Ma io, io scrivo ispirato al mio stesso spirito e le mie parole non resteranno, non saranno tramandate né custodite, così come saranno venute ecco che allo stesso modo scompariranno. E tra una o due generazioni saranno ormai cancellate, io sarò morto per sempre, mentre invece le tue parole rimarranno e le tue parole saranno rivelate per l’eternità. (Behar 2010a, pp. 47-48)

La costruzione di una genealogia immaginata di scrittori/padri ai quali richiamarsi è un punto comune ad altri scrittori di origine *mizrahi*, come rilevato da Ketzia ‘Alon in una recensione del romanzo di Behar (‘Alon 2011). Viene qui alla mente Yitzhaq Gormezano Goren, che in *Ba-derekh la-’itztadion* faceva dire al padre Albert che «se abitassi su un’isola deserta, cosa porterei con me? Difficile a dirsi, ma sicuramente tutti i libri di [Emile] Zola, il Grand-Larousse. […] Anatole France, Pierre Loti, Paul Burgess, Balzac, Hugo, Dumas…» (Gormezano Goren 2007, pp. 67-68). Oppure – per restare nell’ambito della terza generazione *mizrahi* – si ricordi il nonno del

7 Tra gli eventi organizzati: una lettura pubblica di poesie a dicembre 2008 per esprimere solidarietà con il «Nuovo sindacato dei lavoratori precari» presso l’Istituto Weizman di Rehovot e la protesta «Una canzone per Yeruham» di fronte alla filiale di Yeruham, nel sud di Israele, dell’industria Akershtein a gennaio 2010.

protagonista del romanzo di Moshe Sakal *Yolandah* (2011) che considerava gli scrittori da lui più amati come membri della famiglia: «In parallelo ai molti zii e zie che avevo dal lato di mia nonna Yolandah, avevo anche zii da parte di mio nonno e su di loro sentivo molte storie. Ad esempio sul viaggio che lo zio Gustave [Flaubert] aveva compiuto in Egitto alcuni anni prima di scrivere 'Madame Bovary'; dei dolcetti che piacevano tanto a zio Marcel [Proust]» (Sakal 2011, p. 43).

Dietro a queste genealogie s'intravvede innanzi tutto la centralità che il libro e la parola scritta da sempre rivestono nell'ebraismo, come mostrato tra gli altri da Amos Oz e Fania Oz-Salzberger (Oz, Oz-Salzberger 2013). Al tempo stesso, le evidenti differenze nelle genealogie letterarie evocate da Behar da un lato e da Gormezano Goren e Sakal dall'altro, mostrano le considerevoli differenze esistenti tra diverse comunità ebraiche mediorientali: nel caso specifico la più 'araba' e arabofona comunità irachena e quella egiziana più 'cosmopolita' e influenzata dall'Europa (Miccoli c.s.). Direi poi che l'insistenza di alcuni scrittori *mizrahim* su tali genealogie immaginate, potrebbe essere vista come una strategia letteraria volta a superare le difficoltà di trasmissione memoriale da una generazione all'altra e a far riemergere – pur in maniera mediata – quel passato che, come si è detto, era stato inizialmente rimosso.

Anche in quello che è senza dubbio il testo più noto di Behar, vale a dire il racconto del 2008 *'Ana min al-yahud*, troviamo un'interessante riflessione sui nessi tra linguaggio e identità *mizrahi* e tra linguaggio e identità nazionale israeliana. In questo caso il protagonista, *alter ego* dell'autore, è un giovane israeliano di origine mediorientale che di colpo e nello stupore generale, inizia a parlare ebraico con un fortissimo accento arabo:

> In quel momento, la mia lingua si contorse e con l'arrivo del mese di Tammuz, l'accento arabo si impossessò della mia bocca, fin nella gola. Proprio così, mentre camminavo per la strada, l'accento arabo di nonno 'Anwar – sia benedetta la sua memoria – riemerse e per quanto cercassi di allontanarlo da me e di gettarlo in uno dei bidoni dell'immondizia, non ci riuscii. Provai e riprovai ad addolcire la *'ayin* gutturale, come aveva fatto mia madre da bambina a causa dell'insegnante e degli sguardi che le lanciavano gli altri bambini, ma i passanti intorno a me la riconoscevano immediatamente. Tentai di addolcire anche la *het* fricativa e di pronunciarla in modo più gutturale, cercai di non pronunciare la *tzade* come una 's' e di sostituire la *qof* gutturale irachena con una che assomigliasse ad una 'k', ma anche questi sforzi furono vani. (Behar 2008a, p. 55)

Behar prende qui in esame uno dei punti più controversi dell'identità ebraica mediorientale, e cioè l'utilizzo dell'arabo come lingua madre, argomento che aveva appassionato soprattutto la prima generazione di

scrittori ebrei iracheni in Israele. Nel caso di Behar non ci troviamo però di fronte ad un *'oleh hadash* (nuovo immigrato) che preferisce continuare a scrivere in arabo anziché in ebraico, ma al nipote di immigrati che in modo del tutto inconsapevole si ritrova a parlare come il nonno di origine irachena. Behar si identifica totalmente con quest'ultimo, che infatti si palesa dall'aldilà per domandare:

> se vi sia una fine a questa storia e perché la mia storia sia così mischiata alla tua, come sia possibile che io disturbi la tua vita: io sono la generazione del deserto e com'è possibile che tu mi hai riportato in vita. Sei la generazione che abbiamo aspettato, cosicché non vi fossero più differenze tra il tuo passato e il passato dei tuoi insegnanti, perché il nostro passato era talmente doloroso e noi siamo rimasti nel deserto per essere divorati dagli uccelli, per far sì che tu non ti ricordassi di me, per far sì che tu non facessi del male a nessuno. Ma com'è possibile che i tuoi denti digrignino di nuovo le mie parole e poi dove, i quartieri di Gerusalemme sono diversi, non vi sono sale da tè, non v'è il fiume Tigri che l'attraversa. (Behar 2008a, p. 62)

Ecco in poche righe riassunta la storia di due e più generazioni e spiegate le complesse pratiche della memoria e dell'oblio da queste messe in atto nei decenni successivi alla *'aliyyah*. Il nonno rivela sconsolato al nipote che le sue speranze non sono state appagate e che il passato mediorientale della famiglia è diventato un fantasma ingombrante che nessuno può dimenticare. La terza generazione sembra addirittura volersene riappropriare, a differenza di molti dei loro genitori – che avevano cercato di integrarsi a tutti i costi nella società israeliana ashkenazita, salvo poi in alcuni casi far riemergere a distanza di anni quanto era stato rimosso. I genitori del protagonista di *'Ana min al-yahud* non riconoscono il proprio figlio, le sue parole, né il volto barbuto:

> E il padre disse che questo non è nostro figlio e non è questa la barba che abbiamo cresciuto, disse la madre, noi non abbiamo quest'accento, dissero in coro ai poliziotti, non può aver preso quest'accento da nessuno, nessuno della famiglia, suo nonno 'Anwar è morto prima che nascesse, nostro figlio non era ancora nato. (Behar 2008a, p. 64)

Ciò che era stato rimosso, vale a dire tutta una storia e un patrimonio di memorie personificate in questo caso da nonno 'Anwar, tornano a dispetto della propria volontà e – spiega Behar in una poesia della raccolta *Tzima'on be'erot* – a costo di causare nuovi traumi: «il mio arabo è muto | strangolato nella gola | [...] il mio ebraico è sordo, talvolta è così sordo».

Oltre alla lingua ebraica 'arabizzata' spunta poi una barba – tradizionale attributo degli ebrei ultra-ortodossi e degli arabi – che i genitori non ricor-

dano d’aver cresciuto, ma che invece vuole con prepotenza simboleggiare un ulteriore tratto distintivo di un *mizrahi* che non occulta più la propria identità. Behar – scrive in una poesia del 2008 – pensa infatti che di essa non si debba aver paura:

> Non si deve aver timore | di dire la parola nostalgia […] | Non aver timore | di avere un passato | all’interno della scatola | di una memoria chiusa a chiave […] | Non aver paura | di dire che sono un uomo che dimentica | ma ho una memoria | che non intende dimenticarsi di me. (Behar 2008a)

Il passato ebraico mediorientale può tornare ed essere rievocato in forme nuove: esso è al contempo un fantasma, ma anche una risorsa. Inoltre, la terza generazione ha oggi la possibilità non solo di rievocare il passato ma anche di iniziare un dialogo più immediato con i suoi coetanei dei Paesi arabi – ad esempio attraverso la Rete e i *social networks*, ma anche realizzando progetti culturali comuni e che superino le barriere tra israeliani e palestinesi, ebrei e arabi. Queste possibilità, impensabili alcuni decenni fa, rendono adesso il ruolo dei *mizrahim* ancor più prezioso e importante (intervista dell’autore ad ’A. Behar, 2013).

È in questo senso che vanno lette le pagine finali del romanzo *Tchahlah ve-Hezqel*, dove – durante il *seder* (cena rituale) di *Pesah* – si incontrano allo stesso tavolo il rabbino ‘Ovadiah con la moglie Mazal, Tchahlah con Hezqel, sua madre, il fratellastro di quest’ultimo Isma‘il con la madre Ana‘em e una vicina di casa di origine moldava. Durante questo strano *seder*, viene recitata una versione della tradizionale *haggadah* (storia/racconto) non in ebraico ma in arabo: «*Hal sanah nihna hon ‘ibid, sant ’eljayyah fi balad Isra’il* [Quest’anno siamo qui come schiavi, l’anno prossimo saremo in Terra d’Israele]» (Behar 2010a, p. 258).[8] Al termine del pasto il rabbino ‘Ovadiah e la moglie moriranno, dopo aver ricordato a Tchahlah e Hezqel che:

> voi siete gli eredi nostri e della nostra comunità, ve la affidiamo pieni di baldanza [*be-yad ramah*], e con l’aiuto di Dio otterrete grandi cose e persino la pace, crescerete molti bambini e parlerete di noi alle vostre figlie e figli. (Behar 2008a, p. 260)[9]

8 Nella versione originale la frase è in arabo scritto con caratteri ebraici e vocalizzato, senza traduzione in ebraico (né tra parentesi né in nota).

9 L’espressione *be-yad ramah* (lett. «con mano esaltata») è tratta da Esodo 14, 8 – dove si racconta l’uscita degli ebrei dall’Egitto commemorata durante la festa di *Pesah*: «Il Signore indurì il cuore del faraone, re d’Egitto, ed egli inseguì i figli d’Israele che uscivano pieni di baldanza».

Behar avverte con forza il peso di quest’eredità – che racchiude in sé sia la lingua araba del nonno, sia una secolare tradizione ebraica – ed è ben consapevole di quanto sia difficile portarla avanti. Tuttavia, l’invito del rabbino ‘Ovadiah e della moglie Mazal non può essere disatteso ed è dunque sulle loro parole e sugli echi di un Oriente immaginato, perduto ma ancora così vicino, che l’autore chiude il suo romanzo.

5 Note conclusive

In quest’articolo, ho riletto alcuni passi dell’opera letteraria di uno scrittore della terza generazione *mizrahi*, ’Almog Behar, mostrando i tratti distintivi della sua poetica e le principali tematiche da lui finora affrontate. Prima di ciò, ho ripercorso le tre generazioni a oggi esistenti della cosiddetta letteratura *mizrahi*, partendo dalla «letteratura del campo di transito» degli anni Sessanta per poi passare al «ritorno del rimosso» messo in atto dalla seconda generazione e da scrittori come Gormezano Goren, che vedono nel padre una sorta di *alter ego* tramite il quale ricordare un passato a lungo sottaciuto e arrivando infine alla terza generazione – che solo da pochi anni ha debuttato sulla scena letteraria.

Dall’analisi delle tre generazioni e dei loro tratti salienti, sembra di poter dire che in Israele la letteratura abbia svolto e ancora svolga un ruolo cruciale nella trasmissione inter-generazionale della memoria *mizrahi*, più di quanto non facciano per esempio associazioni culturali o musei ‘etnici’. In questi ultimi casi, infatti, sono soprattutto la prima e in parte la seconda generazione a essere coinvolte nella conservazione del patrimonio culturale pre-migrazione (Trevisan Semi et al. 2013; Baussant 2013). La letteratura riesce invece a essere un mezzo privilegiato di trasmissione della memoria anche per i nipoti dei primi ebrei arrivati dal Medio Oriente e Nord Africa. Ciò è dovuto sia a quel valore politico che può ravvisarsi – come si è detto sopra – in testi di natura autobiografica e memoriale quali quelli dei *mizrahim*, sia all’importanza che il libro e la parola scritta hanno da sempre nella cultura ebraica.

Secondo Behar, soltanto attraverso la scrittura di un’«altra storia», più inclusiva e condivisa, sarà possibile giungere a un’identità israeliana che abbracci tutti gli abitanti di questa nazione. Egli anche per questo collega le vicende dei *mizrahim* a quelle di altri gruppi «ai margini» di Israele, come i palestinesi. Per lo scrittore è questa la via maestra per superare da un lato i tratti nostalgici di alcuni scrittori della prima generazione *mizrahi*, ma dall’altra anche per non annullare il proprio passato in un’identità israeliana di matrice ashkenazita. Ai giovani *mizrahim* sta dunque il compito non soltanto di riportare in vita la memoria dei loro antenati ma di aggiornarla e, sostiene Behar, riconnetterla al Medio Oriente di oggi e alle sue problematiche (intervista dell’autore ad ’A. Behar, 2013). È a partire

da questa prospettiva che egli si inserisce nella letteratura israeliana, che in conclusione può essere concepita come un insieme sfaccettato di modelli e linguaggi che vanno ben aldilà dell'originario canone letterario dei primi scrittori in ebraico moderno d'inizio Novecento. Basti pensare alla presenza di scrittori palestinesi di lingua ebraica come Anton Shammas (n. 1950) e Sayed Kashua (n. 1975) o a israeliani che scelgono di scrivere in inglese – è il caso del romanzo *The people of forever are not afraid* pubblicato nel 2012 da Shani Boianju (n. 1987) (Shimony 2012).

Prendendo spunto dai suoi personaggi – poeti improvvisati e sognatori come Hezqel o giovani spaesati e che non sanno più in quale lingua parlare, come il protagonista di *'Ana min al-yahud* – Behar spinge il lettore a domandarsi se sia «davvero possibile far tornare a galla la cultura, la storia e le stesse comunità *mizrahi* dopo che sono state distrutte e dissolte? [...] Davvero dobbiamo augurarci che vi siano una terza e poi una quarta e quinta generazione e dunque una presenza continua della cultura *mizrahi* nella società israeliana? [...] O dobbiamo invece cercare di cambiare l'identità israeliana cosicché essa giunga a un compromesso tra i *mizrahim*, gli ashkenaziti, i palestinesi, i russi, gli etiopi e così via?» (Behar 2013b). La risposta a questi interrogativi è a oggi complicata e lo scrittore preferisce non darne una, quasi a ribadire come i *mizrahim* – e con essi forse tutta Israele – ancora siano personaggi 'in transito', a metà tra *fiction* e storia, esilio e ritorno, e che esitano a trovare una collocazione definitiva. Essi sembrano disseminare innumerevoli 'tracce' di sé e del proprio passato lungo il percorso intrapreso dalla letteratura israeliana e ai margini del canone letterario ebraico, arricchendoli di prospettive nuove e impensate dalle generazioni precedenti: «era come se il tempo avesse avuto un'altra storia, una storia diversa» (Behar 2008a, p. 58).

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Across Europe and the Mediterranean Sea
Exploring Jewish Memories from Libya

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Abstract The article aims at presenting a cross-disciplinary project on the histories and memories of the Jews from Libya: *Mapping Living Memories: The Jewish Diaspora from Libya across Europe and the Mediterranean*. The project was designed and carried out by the authors of this article; its main outcome is a collection of interviews with fifty men and women who consider themselves to be Jews and who left Libya from the 1940s to the 1960s, moving to Italy, Israel, France and the UK. The purpose of this article is twofold: firstly, to outline the premises and distinctive features of the project, highlighting how the collection contributes to the further elaboration of the notion of 'Libyan Jewry'; secondly, to point out the potential of this project for postcolonial readings in History.

Over the last year, the CDEC Foundation of Milan (*Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea*, Jewish Contemporary Documentation Centre) has been host to an innovative and cross-disciplinary project on the histories and memories of the Jews from Libya: *Mapping Living Memories*: *The Jewish Diaspora from Libya across Europe and the Mediterranean*. The main outcome of the project is a collection of interviews with fifty men and women, who consider themselves to be Jews and who left Libya from the 1940s to the 1960s, moving to Italy, Israel, France and the UK. The interviews are now archived in Milan at the CDEC Foundation, along with digital copies of personal records, photographs, and other materials donated by the interviewees.[1]

1 The CDEC Foundation is a leading Italian centre for the study of Jewish history, culture and society, with special reference to Italy and the contemporary period and a specific commitment to collecting and archiving pertinent documentation. As such, it collaborates with public and private institutions, Jewish organisations and Italian and international educational and research institutes on Jewish history and the Shoah, including, among others, the *Mémorial de la Shoah* in Paris, the Primo Levi Centre in New York and the Yad Vashem Museum in Jerusalem. In addition to its role as a repository of documents, the CDEC Foundation is committed to scientific research and its international dissemination through the publication of *Quest*:

The project was designed and carried out by the authors of this article, as part of their respective doctoral and postdoctoral research. As such, it benefited from support and advice from a number of academic and research bodies in Europe and Israel as well as from substantial funding from the European Sources Material Programme of the Rothschild Foundation.[2]

This article aims to present the *Mapping Living Memories* project by explaining its premises, methodologies, implementation, and potential. All of these will be further developed in our work and, hopefully, in the work of scholars using these sources in the future. The project stemmed from a collaboration between two early career scholars with a European background – specifically with research into the history of Italians in the Mediterranean during the age of European empires (Barbara Spadaro) and into Hebrew language, literature and social anthropology (Piera Rossetto). It was focused on the Jews from Libya as subjects whose transnational trajectories and multiple belongings stimulate new perspectives on the history and cultures of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. We will start by outlining the premises and distinctive features of the project, highlighting our respective understanding of its cross-disciplinary nature and the paths it has opened up to us for further investigation. While we carried out the fieldwork jointly, our respective backgrounds shaped our perceptions of the materials gathered. For this reason, this article includes both co-written and single-authored sections. Piera Rossetto has written sections 2 and 3, and Barbara Spadaro section 4. Everything else has been co-written, reflecting the encounter of our creative and intellectual energies.

1 Premises and Distinctive Features

The preliminary goals of our project were to map the movement of the Jewish diaspora from Libya to its destinations in Europe and Israel, to stress

Issues in Contemporary Jewish History (`http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/`), an open-source, peer-reviewed journal acting as an international forum for the latest scholarship on the history, culture and society of the Jews in Italy within wider international debates. *Quest*, 4, 2012, edited by Emanuela Trevisan Semi and Piera Rossetto is a special issue on *Memory and Forgetting among Jews from the Arab-Muslim Countries*: *Contested Narratives of a Shared Past*.

2 The authors are grateful to prof. Emanuela Trevisan Semi (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice), prof. Maurice Roumani (Ben Gurion University of Jerusalem), prof. Harvey Goldberg (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), dr. Michèle Baussant (CNRS, Paris), prof. Frédéric Abécassis (ENS, Lyon) and Dr. Simon Levis Sullam (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice), for supporting, encouraging, and discussing the project, and prof. Charles F. Burdett (University of Bristol) and dr. Roberta Pergher (Indiana University) for comments on this article. For assistance and supervision, special thanks is due to Michele Sarfatti, Liliana Picciotto and Laura Brazzo at the CDEC Foundation. We are also grateful to the Society for Libyan Studies and the British School at Rome for enabling Barbara Spadaro to conduct essential preliminary research. And to David Perkins de Oliveira for assisting us in the final revision of the text.

the vividness of its memory in 'hosting' communities and countries and to collect neglected testimonies of historical events.

Before proceeding any further, our use of the word 'diaspora' deserves explanation. As a result of its remarkable proliferation in different academic and social realms, the meaning of diaspora has been stretched in various directions, in a sort of «'diaspora' of diaspora – a dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space» (Brubaker 2005, p. 1). Nevertheless, the concept continues to provide research with perspectives and insights (Anteby-Yemini et al. 2005; Braziel, Mannur 2010) that enrich our understanding of a human phenomenon in which different elements are at play: dispersion and dissemination (Prévélakis 1996), homeland and multiple belongings, boundary maintenance and boundary erosion (Brubaker 2005, p. 6). It is in this frame of reference that we consider the 'diaspora' of the Jews from Libya as a phenomenon historically situated between the Second World War and 1970 in which these people were dispersed across different countries which were likely to become their multiple identity referents (Bordes-Benayoun 2002) – and for different reasons, including political turmoil, insecurity and individual and collective searches for a better and more meaningful life. Our interviewees negotiated the meaning of their trajectories from Libya starting from different points of departure, thus interpreting the sense of their experience, and that of their belonging to this 'diaspora', using different frameworks. A core strand of our research is the acknowledgment of such dynamic interrogation and the investigation of its interaction with changes in the historical and cultural context.

On the eve of their major dispersion, which occurred from the 1940s to the 1960s, the community of Jews living in Libya numbered about 38,000 (Goldberg 2012) – being the smallest, yet one of the oldest Jewries of North Africa. As was the case of sister communities in the region – e.g. that of Tunis – those of Tripoli and Benghazi were highly diversified in social and cultural terms, having been exposed to a vast range of contacts and patterns of circulation between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East since the second half of the 19th century. As these circuits intertwined with a large range of secular and religious networks of mobility and exchange, the Jews in Libya were confronted with wider processes of decolonization, post-colonial migration and resettlement. These drew most of them to Israel (mainly between 1948 and 1952) and the former colonial metropolis, Italy (1967-1969).

Academic works addressing this specific diaspora are still less numerous and less known than those concerning other Jewish diasporas from North Africa and the Middle East (Attal 2009). Documentation regarding its history is extremely scattered, often uncatalogued, and difficult to access. Thus this collection of interviews and private records concentrated primarily on rescuing fading life stories and neglected sources – notably

those of the last generation of Jews born in Libya. This is in line with the principal aims of the CDEC Foundation, which has recently launched a new line of research on the social and cultural profile of Italian Jewry aimed at documenting the contribution of Jewish *edoth* (ethnic communities) from North Africa, the Middle East and Iran to Jewish culture in Italy.[3] The *Mapping Living Memories* project participates in this endeavour but, at the same time, expanded its investigation to include other destinations and patterns of migration. We targeted subjects who consider themselves to be Jews and, by referring to them as 'Jews from Libya' and not 'Libyan Jews', we wish to stress the great variety of origins, nationalities, local and transnational identities they carry with them. The roots and trajectories of our interviewees are kaleidoscopic, with new overlappings generated in the contexts of their arrival in new locations – as in the case of those Italian-speaking members of the former Benghazi elite who, in Rome, find themselves labelled as '*Tripolini*' (Tripolitanians).

A distinctive feature of *Mapping Living Memories* is that materials were gathered in multiple destinations of the diaspora. Existing collections of records and interviews, notably in Israel and in Italy, are the result of scattered, private initiatives undertaken by community centres and museums of the Jews of Libya and increasingly shared via the Internet. Earlier scholarship relied on diplomatic and institutional archives (De Felice 1978; Roumani 2008), reflecting the specific perspectives of Jewish and non-Jewish organizations monitoring the main streams of migration at critical moments, for example in 1948 and 1967. Our aim was to widen such perspectives by collecting life stories from across multiple destinations in Europe and Israel (with trans-oceanic destinations reserved for further stages of research) and considering narratives originating from community centres as well as networks based around alternative hubs, e.g. family, social and non-Jewish ones.

Rather than charting the demographic profile of the different communities – which is a task for experienced demographers – we were interested in exploring the different streams of migration and multiple meanings associated with 'being a Jew from Libya' in different contexts. However, our search for Jews from Libya in 'alternative' destinations has obviously led us to engage with the available surveys and common perceptions of the demographic configuration of this diaspora in different countries. This resulted in a contemplation of the way in which statistical representations build collective identities, reflecting mainstream (national) narratives. For example, we realised that even in the most recent surveys (Campelli 2013), Italian Jews have not been counted according to their country of origin and the shared opinion that the arrival of the «Tripolini» has secured demographic

3 Notably focussing on the case study of the city of Milan. See the project's website (in Italian): `http://www.cdec.it/home2.asp?idtesto=1355`.

survival of the Italian Jewish community cannot be supported by statistics yet.[4] In contrast, Israeli immigration surveys (1948-1979) provide numbers per year of the Jews who entered the country from Libya and of Israelis with a 'Libyan' father. In the UK, despite the number of Jews from Libya resident in the country proving far fewer than we originally estimated, the production of self and community narratives was lively and indeed enlightening for our research questions. In short, the *Mapping Living Memories* project was not a study of the demographics of the diaspora of the Jews from Libya: the latter, we think, would be a task for skilled demographers trained in managing and comparing different systems and models of categorization in population statistics. However, our focus on the self-perception of the subjects involved in this project – their self-perception as Jews – highlights historical and political issues which play a role in demographic representations, bringing us back to the questions underlying our research: Who should be counted as a 'Jew from Libya'? How is this 'identification' articulated between collective narratives and personal *parcours* (Bertaux 2010, p. 37) in specific historical frameworks? What does the expression 'Jewish diaspora from Libya' account for?

2 A 'Libyan Jewry'? Notes from the Fieldwork

The cultural and historical complexity of the notion of 'Libyan Jewry' has been elaborated on recently by anthropologist Harvey Goldberg (Goldberg 2012). Comparing patterns of designation of this group, originating both within and outside of it, Goldberg shows the tight connection between the different terms that are used and the historical and cultural contexts in which they were forged. Goldberg explores the case of Israel in particular, where Jews from Libya arrived quite early in comparison to other *edoth* (ethnic communities). He also highlights the role played by heritage centres and journal publications in conveying to the 'public' different articulations of the notion of 'Libyan Jewry'. The question of how different generations react to the *mise en musée* of community heritage is an interesting perspective from which to explore issues of transmission and collective memory processes. Considering the example of the Libyan heritage centre in Or Yehuda, Goldberg assumes a connection between the success of the museum and the generational juncture at which it was created: «This first generation has dwindled, and many of their children, who only partially appreciate some of the items (or texts or photos), but do not want to discard them, have adopted the Museum enthusiastically as a

4 Some statistic data about the presence in Rome of Jews born in Libya is available in Natale, Toscano 2010.

way of both preserving the family past, gaining recognition, and relieving themselves of clutter» (Goldberg 2012, p. 22).

The inclination towards «documenting and 'preserving' the past» (Goldberg 2012, p. 14) showed by the Jews from Libya is a feature we discussed with our interviewees not only in Israel, but also in the other destinations. In Rome, for instance, where the Jews from Libya represent a significant part of the Jewish population, cultural and social activities dealing with Libyan Jewish traditions, history and memories are attracting more and more interest and recognition. Cultural and social interactions provide the conditions for the collective construction of memory, for shaping what I have elsewhere termed the 'relational memory' among Jews from Libya (Rossetto 2013). In such settings, personal and collective memories are mutually articulated; as in a *jeu de miroirs* they reflect each other's influences. This influence can be traced in narratives and detected in the circulation of recurring elements, such as the summoning of tragic events, heroic deeds, or prominent figures, evoked by many as essential markers of the collective history. Using this mutual interaction between the personal and the collective as a lens through which to read our collection might represent an interesting development of the project.

However, there is potential for research to be developed in another direction, based on the observation that, while cultural activities promoting Libyan Jewish heritage are not a completely new phenomenon among the Jewish community of Rome,[5] the collected interviews confirm an increase in both initiatives involving and interest shown by different generations.[6] Bearing this in mind, it would be possible to scrutinise the collection for clues that could address the following questions: What are the conditions (social, economic and cultural) that determined this phenomenon in the contemporary Italian context? Is this perhaps, in Goldberg's terms, the «generational juncture» favourable to the promoting of such initiatives? In respect to heritage and transmission, is it possible to draw a comparison between the initiatives promoted by the Jews from Libya in Israel and those

5 Recalling the history of this kind of activism among the Jews from Libya would require much more space than that we have in this article. However, as an example of it, we could mention the tireless activism of Raffaello Fellah, as witnessed by many of our interviewees, as well as by an impressive amount of documentation donated by the family of Raffaello Fellah to the CDEC Foundation, in the context of the *Mapping Living Memories* project. In addition to that, we should at least mention that important initiatives were promoted in the UK, to arouse interest in the past but also the future of the Jews from Libya. In this respect, we thank Mr Raphael Luzon for providing us with relevant material and essential first-hand knowledge.

6 We could mention several persons, women and men, whose long lasting or more recent commitment towards promoting the traditions of Jews from Libya has contributed to this growing interest and awareness. In order to avoid any regrettable omission, we prefer not to mention individual figures. We limit the discussion to the observation that they could be considered as '*entrepreneurs de mémoire*', in line with the explanation of the category elaborated by Trevisan Semi (2006; 2013).

in Rome? Would it be possible to expand the comparison by including other groups in a situation of transnational migration and perhaps adopt tools that have shown to be effective in exploring the construction of resulting identities (Jaspal, Cinnirella 2012)?

This last perspective could prove to be an interesting one, able to illuminate the processes of affirmation of ‘a Libyan Jewish identity’ and the designation of what constitutes, or not, *un ebreo tripolino* (a Tripolitanian Jew).[7] These issues are growing in importance within the Jewish community of Rome and beyond. We are conscious that, as researchers, we may have contributed to the construction of the notion of ‘Libyan Jewry’ inasmuch as we questioned people assuming that they were, to some extent, a part of it. Being aware of the «challenge of essentialism» (Faist 2012) that might accompany research dealing with diasporic and transnational communities, I encouraged interviewees to expand on alternative heterogeneities (Faist 2012, p. 57) that shape(d) their individuality. On the one hand, heterogeneities in individual histories are essential to highlight personal *parcours* that have sometimes been overlooked by collective-official narratives. On the other hand, the combination of personal heterogeneous *parcours*, through a process of progressive construction (Bertaux 2010, p. 36), could help arrive at a much wider sociological understanding of what is collectively and officially transmitted. In the next section, I will consider the issue of ‘mobility’ as a marker of heterogeneity and as an indicator of further possible directions of inquiry.

3 Across Europe and the Mediterranean Sea

As previously mentioned, a distinctive feature of *Mapping Living Memories* is that materials were gathered across multiple destinations of the diaspora of the Jews from Libya, namely Israel, Italy, Great Britain and France. The multiple destinations considered in our research often coincide with the country of arrival after emigration. In other cases, they represent one of the different stages that formed the migration *parcours*. While listening to life stories, however, we soon realised that ‘mobility’ is an experience that extends far beyond a point of departure and a point of arrival. The life stories we have collected testify to the

7 As an example of how issues of identity and belonging to a group cross groups themselves and generations, I quote a recent video shot among young Jews living in Rome and posted on the web. The video would deserve further observation and contextualization, but in the scope of this article I can retain only the fact that each participant is presented, in subtitles, with her/his name, age and one of the following designations: *tripolina/o* (Tripolitanian), *romana/o* (Roman), *misto/a* (mixed). It would be interesting to further inquire the young participants about their personal self-attribution in the terms of these categories: `http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwIREq-QKok` (2014-02-18).

other 'crossings' that took place during the lifetime of our interviewees, and even before, shaping their 'positionality' not only in terms of geographical location but also in terms of understanding their personal and collective *parcours*.

Mobility across the Mediterranean, for instance, appears in the genealogies we collected. The stories of two of our interviewees are a case in point: the first is taken from the interview with F., who left Tripoli in 1967;[8] and the second from the interview with A., born in Rome into a family of Libyan origin which left Tripoli in 1948.[9] While tracing the origins of his family, F. talked about his great-grandfather, a French military official. A lieutenant of Napoleon during the Egyptian campaign, he apparently fell in love with the daughter of a general and fled to Tripoli. He settled there, keeping his French nationality and passing it on to his heirs, probably together with at least one property in France. Our interviewee, in fact, recalls that his brother went to France to study and lived in a house in Paris that belonged to the family. In 1967, fleeing Libya with his mother, F. chose Paris as a destination despite not knowing the language (he spoke only Italian) and never having set foot in the country. Having his brother there and a house where he could stay influenced the direction his life would take. In this sense, it could be argued that a 'mobility of the past' shaped a 'mobility in the future', a *parcours* from the past determined the conditions for a new direction. F.'s story is not an exception with regards to the experience of mass emigration of Jews from Arab and Muslim countries that took place in the second half of the 20th century. As pointed out by Abécassis and Faü (2011, p. 831), Jewish communities in the Muslim world were far from homogeneous from a social, economic and cultural point of view. As individuals and as families, Jews could count on highly heterogeneous 'capital' (human, social, material), and this, according to the scholars, clearly influenced the directions they embarked on at the moment of leaving. Even if F.'s story is just one of many, it nevertheless prompts another set of questions in relation to the Libyan experience. Indeed, our research showed very few Jews from Libya chose France as their destination. This choice seems to represent an exception, positioning these Jews at what we could call the 'periphery' of this dispersion. How are these «narratives from the periphery» connected to those of the 'centres', namely Israel and Italy? Do issues of affiliation with and transmission of 'Libyan Jewry' (in the sense we previously articulated) arise in this peripheral location?

A second, particularly fascinating example of mobility is the story of A.'s grandparents. His grandfather M. was born in Tiberias to a Jewish

8 Interview with F., in Paris, 20 June 2013.

9 Interview with A., in Rome, 3 July 2013.

family belonging to the ancient nucleus of Jewish families still living in the four holy cities of Palestine. The family then crossed «the Orient», as A. described it to eventually settle down in Tripoli where one day, caught by stormy weather, a boat carrying a group of young Jewish itinerant artists sought refuge. They originally came from Alexandria and used to travel across the Mediterranean and the Middle East to perform as musicians, singers and dancers in weddings, *bar mitzvah* or *henna*, «a sort of bachelorette party» as A. defined it for us. Among this group there was also his grandmother N., born in Aleppo but living in Alexandria with her family. According to the story that A.'s mother used to tell him, some Jewish families in Tripoli heard of the young artists' arrival in the port and offered them hospitality since it was the eve of Shabbat. On that occasion, the two grandparents met and fell in love, changing the destiny of grandmother N., who, from an itinerant artist, became a midwife, while at the same time keeping some her old habits:

> Yes, but she was an emancipated woman, she used to dress according to European fashion, even if on some occasions, such as feasts she took part in, she wore clothes of oriental tradition, but definitely she was an emancipated woman, a chain smoker, which was a huge transgression for the time, but she kept this habit, and for that she was pointed out by women.

A. recalls his mother smiling while talking about his grandmother. Apparently she was not ashamed of revealing her mother's transgression (smoking), nor her previous profession as singer in a group of itinerant artists. It is precisely the fact that this story was not concealed in the history of the family, but was rather transmitted, and transmitted in a positive spirit, that struck my attention. The borders of social constructions about what does, or does not, fit into official and familiar narratives can be 'mobile'. What does push, or pull, these borders in the stories we collected? How are they negotiated in respect to other articulations, such as social, economic or cultural mobility?

The examples we have just briefly touched upon demonstrate the potentiality of reading the *Mapping Living Memories* collection employing key concepts such as 'mobility'. In a similar way, others can be mobilised to grasp what we identified, from the beginning of this project, as one of our main interests: exploring different streams of migration and multiple meanings associated with 'being a Jew from Libya' in different contexts.

4 Memory and the Unravelling of Postcolonial Histories

As previously mentioned, a main objective of the *Mapping Living Memories* project was to gather neglected life stories and testimonies of historical events for the *National Archive of Jewish Oral History* at the CDEC Foundation of Milan. Such a task, involving 18 months of project implementation and interview fieldwork, was understood by and negotiated between researchers, the hosting institution, and the interviewees in many different ways. By challenging our scholarly backgrounds, premises and methodologies, this process certainly helped to refine our academic approach, and how we carried out the fieldwork. This section will outline some of the premises and research questions which motivated the cross-disciplinary nature of this research from my viewpoint as a historian and highlight the potential of this project for historical reading.

The trajectories of our interviewees are drawn on a map of decades of colonial and postcolonial relations between Italy and Libya, Europe and its others. We gathered personal and family histories from fifty men and women from two generations. The eldest interviewee was born under Fascist rule in 1925 and the youngest in the mid-fifties. The stories collected chart shifts of concepts of Europe and 'the West', 'Empire' and 'home', 'Europe' and its 'others' as well as the related transformation in understanding of difference, 'race' and citizenship. The experience of such shifts – for example of inclusion and rejection from Italian, European or Libyan citizenship or from ideas of Jewish or non-Jewish culture – have marked the lives, strategies and self-narratives of our interviewees in many different ways. These men and women from North Africa brought with them to Italy, Europe, and Israel, multiple ways of being 'Jew', 'Arab', 'Italian', highlighting the historically constructed nature and the ongoing, mutual shaping of these very concepts. In line with recent scholarship in Jewish Cultural Studies (Biale 2002; Bassi 2011) and History (German et al. 2011), this project addressed the study of the Jews from Libya not as a pre-determined collective, but as subjects who consider themselves to be Jews, whose multi-dimensional interaction with cultures and societies has shaped ideas of Jewish and non-Jewish belonging over time. Such an approach informed our interview fieldwork in significant ways, as I will illustrate below.

Memory and subjectivity, as many scholars have pointed out (i.e., Passerini 2003), connect past and present through fantasy and imagination, raising fundamental questions about the meaning and practices of History. My investigation proceeded at two interconnected levels: questioning national/community narratives through the exploration of multi-dimensional belonging of our interviewees and addressing the intimate, the material, the every-day and the imaginary, to illuminate subjective appropriation of mainstream narratives of belonging.

The *Mapping Living Memories* project should therefore be read as a

collection of self-narratives illuminating dynamic processes of memory and forgetting, rather than as a repository of rare ethnographic data and testimonies on a factual past. Some of our interviewees used the word *mitzvah* (in Hebrew, religious duty) to explain their participation in this project, meaning fulfilment of a duty of testimony towards their families and religious communities. I believe that some of them would agree that our encounters also testify to how the past, traditions and identities are constantly being forged.

This is apparent in how our conversations sprang out of expectations, resistance, conflicts and negotiations between interviewers and interviewees. These include external factors at play in each different context of our fieldwork, since individual and collective narratives about the Jews from Libya intertwined with local streams of national and community narratives, emerging from the kaleidoscope of public memory.

Our project is hosted by the CDEC, a Jewish foundation and an institution widely acknowledged for its work on the history and memory of the Holocaust in Italy. This manifestly shaped the expectations of most interviewees, influencing their narratives, responses and what they would share with us. For example, our work was frequently understood as a gathering of testimonies of the violence suffered by the Jews from Libya, in line with the core expertise and research activities of the CDEC, despite the project being presented as a study focused on neglected aspects of the history of the diaspora of the Jews from Libya and one with a particular emphasis on women's perspectives, domesticity, gender relations, and family memories.

We avoided relying on the CDEC's official networks in an attempt to minimise such effects. For example, when setting up interviews, we chose to proceed via a snowball technique, asking each interviewee to suggest names and contacts of others who would be interested in helping with the project. Thus our fieldwork was largely directed by informal and family networks instead of religious or community institutions. For the same reason, we did not conduct interviews on the premises of the CDEC Foundation because it is an important historical site for the Jews of Milan and a hub of religious and cultural activities. Instead, each encounter was a unique event, staged by the interviewees in a location of their choice – notably their homes, offices or other places they judged relevant. This was a pivotal consideration in all contexts of our fieldwork.

Inevitably though, our institutional umbrella acted as one of the filters between us and the interviewees: for example, they tended to assume our Jewishness and attachment to religious tradition. Indeed, if the issue was not raised in preliminary phone contacts, it was during our visit, since apparently our names and attitudes rarely corresponded to expectations. Some of the strategies employed to deal with such discrepancies, before ascertaining our religious background, remain recorded in the interviews. They provide an interesting perspective on the intersubjective dynamics at

play in the encounters, occasionally marking some hilarious moments. For example, the defiant tone adopted by people perceiving us as pious young women when 'confessing' lack of celebration of Jewish rituals, questions on the origins of our names, speculations as to our uncommon interest in Jewish culture and history, not to mention some awkward comments on our 'non-Jewish' physical appearance. Such comments also reveal aspects of our interlocutors' self-perception and self-stereotyping based on their ideas of Jewishness. To put it in Alessandro Portelli's words, the acknowledgement of our difference – in this case identified as Jewish versus non-Jewish belonging – constituted a major source of the content and drama of our encounters, springing from the continuous marking and erasing of that 'line' between us (Portelli 2007, p. 67).

Another set of tensions woven into the narratives of the Jews from Libya which is worth evoking in the present overview is intertwined with the contested memories of Fascism, the colonial past and the Holocaust. In recent years, episodes of rehabilitation of Fascist figures in public memory in Italy have been identified by historians as forms of revisionism and historical manipulation (Mammone 2006). However, I argue that how these instances of rehabilitation interact with memories of Italian colonialism, including personal narratives of former settlers in Italian colonies, requires further investigation in order to deepen our understanding of the meanings of Fascism and colonialism in contemporary Italy as well as engaging with the history of Italian rule in Africa (Pergher 2014). The perceptions of Fascism and Italian colonialism expressed by our interviewees provide an important, albeit neglected, perspective on manifestations of colonial nostalgia in Italy, which illuminates how Italy, fascism and colonialism meant different things to different people and how feelings of belonging, memories and multiple understanding of citizenship are shaped by emotions and personal trajectories. Perhaps one of the most striking examples of the overlaps of different perceptions in the manifestation of colonial memory gathered in this collection is a recent initiative by Walter Arbib, a successful businessman from Tripoli. Arbib, who is an Italian, Israeli and Canadian citizen, played a decisive role in resolving the legal and political stalemate between Italy and Ethiopia concerning the return of the Axum obelisk, an archaeological treasure taken by the Italians during colonial rule. In our interview, he showed no interest in the colonial origins of the controversy surrounding the obelisk, presenting his personal initiative instead as an act of philanthropy and «a gift from the Jews from Libya», a sign of gratitude to Italy, the country which provided refuge to «his community» when they fled Tripoli in 1967.[10] With

10 Interview with Walter Arbib, Rome (18 July 2013). Due to the public nature of the initiative, and according to the interviewee's will, reference to this interview requires no pseudonym or abbreviation.

my background as a European historian investigating narratives of colonial nostalgia and postcolonial migration, I found the reply – with its lack of interest in the symbolic dimension of the obelisk within Italy's colonial history – to be unsettling. Yet, reflecting on it, I realized that Mr Arbib's narrative illuminates just how many points of view are possible on the same history. From a postcolonial point of view, I would call this an example of 'divided memories' (Contini 1997; Foot 2009) which allow deeper, broader understanding of the past and of its shifting and multiple meanings as well as of the different (political) identities stemming from transnational trajectories of belonging.

The Jews from Libya are not celebrated heroes of the Resistance, nor monumentalised victims of colonialism; their relation with ideas of Italianness and whiteness is far more fluid, resulting in a tremendous lesson on the shifting meanings of histories and identities. Our interviewees do not «choose to address their complex origins, identity, and language use» in the same ways as other subjects already targeted by scholars of Italian postcolonialism – people expressing «consciousness of form of domination and resistance within Italian culture as related to power structures that are connected to both colonial policies and new global dynamics» (Ponzanesi 2012, p. 60). The men and women we interviewed do not articulate those forms of «counter-hegemonic stance», yet their trajectories and narratives challenge ideas of homogeneity in Italian history and culture, from indirect perspectives that require scholars to be critically aware.

In this sense, the *Mapping Living Memories* Project has the potential to bring further feminist and transnational approaches to the history of the Mediterranean and its subjects on the move. It is an exploration of «histories that nobody wanted» (Clancy-Smith 2010), an investigation of disregarded patterns connecting Europe, North Africa and the Middle East through perspectives long marginalized by nation-centred accounts of nation-building, decolonization and democracy. All these narratives tell stories of cohesive and neatly defined communities, usually stemming from progressive myths of struggle, survival and (national) regeneration. As a core manifestation of European and imperial culture since the 18th century, this tradition of History writing has been appropriated and 'translated' into the histories of Europe's internal and external 'others' – i .e., nationalist histories of decolonization and histories of religious, ethnic and other minorities. Reflecting on our fieldwork, I would argue that this collection of interviews calls for a postcolonial way of reading – and writing – the histories of Italy, Europe and the Mediterranean. This approach should make use of wider, more inclusive frameworks in order to relativise the epistemological approaches of Western scholarship and its notions of subjectivity, politics and modernity.

5 Conclusion: If, by Chance, an Anthropologist Happens to Meet a Historian

As happens when ‘disciples’ of different disciplines meet, in this case a historian and an anthropologist, we have drawn inspiration and knowledge from very different work on the history and culture of the Jews in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Starting as simple collaboration between two early career scholars, this project has been the cause of mutual enrichment and is now taking our research questions and ambitions in unexpected directions.

As this article has illustrated, the *Mapping Living Memories* project has raised questions on the creation of communities and identities by investigating the memories of the Jews from Libya. The study of memory is acknowledged as a vast intellectual field, drawing from and contributing to different specialisms. Despite the distance between our backgrounds, we have discovered overlaps in the articulation of many of our research questions which we believe have enriched our joint fieldwork and the main output of this project – the collection of interviews with the Jews from Libya across Europe and the Mediterranean deposited at the CDEC Foundation of Milan. The overlaps in this article and the diverse contributions to different fields of study that we envisage, reflect our experience.

Minorities and postcolonial diasporas, along with their cultural and material manifestations, have long been overlooked by political and historical narratives stemming from Eurocentric or ‘Western’ epistemological frameworks. In recent decades, postcolonial, cultural and feminist studies have been at the forefront of transformations in the scholarship landscape. The historical study of migration and memory has turned to emerging narratives from ‘marginalized’ or ‘silenced’ subjects and communities, questioning the mechanisms of memory and forgetting.

The histories and memories of Jews from Arab countries are a case in point and the *Mapping Living Memories* project engaged with the Jews from Libya and questioned national-based narratives. The project listened to fifty voices speaking in multiple languages about ‘being a Jew from Libya’. Our approach tackled this diaspora as a dynamic phenomenon, in which identities and communities are constantly being constructed, reflecting multiple subjectivities, senses of belonging and self-perceptions which have all determined the strategies and patterns of integration of these subjects at different destinations and historical moments. By unravelling the multiple understandings of ‘being a Jew from Libya’ among people who have accepted being identified as such – and interviewed for this project – we have simultaneously put into question the very notion of ‘Libyan Jewry’ and explored multiple ideas of Italianness, Jewishness and whiteness.

As narratives of the self these interviews contain, along with much information, a variety of emotions: fear, rage, love, hope, nostalgia, regret and tender-

ness. They bear testimony to the human desire for inclusion and belonging and the incessant negotiations between the individual and community, which result in elaborated combinations of imagination and material feelings. While carrying out the investigation of these manifestations of human creativity in history and society, we hope that the sources we have collected and the sharing of multiple readings of this project will stimulate fellow scholars to raise new questions, perspectives and narratives on the history of the Mediterranean, its moving subjects, and transforming communities.

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Ultra-orthodox Jewish Women Go to Work
Secular Education and Vocational Training as Sources of Emancipation and Modernization

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Abstract In the last three decades the ultra-orthodox community in Israel has experienced great changes in its internal social functioning. More specifically, these developments were linked to the education of ultra-orthodox women. Through an accurate review of the existing literature and a series of in-depth interviews with Israeli scholars, rabbis, educators and women of the ultra-orthodox community in Jerusalem, it was found that the introduction of new vocational and academic tracks in women's education, is gradually changing the internal social structure of the ultra-orthodox family and community. The main consequence is expressed in a modification of the traditional patriarchal framework and in a renegotiation of gender roles within the ultra-orthodox family and community.

1 Introduction

In the last three decades the ultra-orthodox community in Israel has experienced great changes in its internal social functioning. Through an accurate review of the existing literature and a series of in-depth interviews to members of the ultra-orthodox (*haredi*) community in Jerusalem, this study will try to show how these transformations are linked to women's education. More specifically, it was found that the introduction of new vocational and academic training courses in women's educational tracks, is gradually changing the internal social structure of the ultra-orthodox family and community.

Since the late 1980s some fundamental ethnographical and anthropological studies have paid attention to the *haredi* community and its lifestyle, focusing on its social functioning and its religious traditions and rituals (Friedman 1991; Heilman 1992). However, all these studies concentrated mainly, when not exclusively, on the male part of the community, completely overlooking women or bestowing on them a secondary role. Numerous oth-

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er ethnographical studies have been conducted especially to examine *haredi* politics and the ethnic divisions within the community (Shokeid 1995; Leon 2008; Caplan 2007; Abbas 2013); its economic situation (Bezalel 2006; Shiffman 2011) and so forth. In this respect, a special attention was reserved to formal and informal religious education, as one of the main tenets of *haredi* life (Bar-Lev 1991; Heilman 1992; Shiffer 1999; Maoz 2007). Yet, it was only towards the end of the 20th century that Israeli scholars begun to publish studies on the *haredi* woman (El-Or 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997; Caplan 2003), its education (El-Or 1994) and, later on, on ultra-orthodox women vocational training and academic education, leading to employment (Lupu 2005; Ben Shahar 2009; Blumen 2002; Longman 2008; Garr, Marans 2001; Baum et al. 2013). Nevertheless, all the studies carried on thus far, have concentrated on a very limited sample survey and on very specific cases (Garr, Marans 2001; Baum et al. 2013), without considering the effects of women's education and employment on the ultra-orthodox community at large. In particular, the most significant study carried out on *haredi* women's education – *Educated and Ignorant: Ultra-orthodox Jewish Women and their World* by Tamar El-Or (1994) – is an ethnographical research on the education of *haredi* women, focusing on their life within the community and on informal education, rather than on schools, vocational training and gainful employment. Still it provides the reader with a clear idea and a vivid look on the life in a Gur Hassidic ultra-orthodox neighborhood, and on the traditional role of women as mothers and housewives.

Against this background, the aim of this research is to share some more light on the multifaceted feminine side of the *haredi* community, and identify key stages in the evolution of women's education, especially vocational training and academic education. The choice of focusing on women was made since they constitute a significant link in preservation mechanisms in the *haredi* community and at the same time they provide an indication of familial and societal processes of change occurring within it.

As a result, it will be shown how the developments within the *haredi* educational system mirror the bigger transformations that the entire ultra-orthodox community is undergoing, especially with respect to its internal functioning (power relations between men and women, education, work, the role of women etc.). More specifically, this research has two main objectives:

- to show how the *haredi* educational system for women has evolved in the last decades;
- to explain how the development in the education system changed the role of women within the *haredi* family and led to a renegotiation of gender roles.

First, through a review of the existing literature, an overview of the *haredi* community in Israel and of its educational system will be offered. Then the

look will shift to women and their role in the private and public sphere, with a specific focus on girls' educational system and its evolution. The innovative character of the research will be presented in the last part, through the results of a fieldwork activity carried out in Jerusalem in the summer of 2013. The paradox of women's education and the renegotiation of gender roles ongoing in the ultra-orthodox community, will be highlighted through the help of in-depth interviews with Israeli scholars, educators, rabbis and women from the ultra-orthodox community in Jerusalem. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings and of their implications on the future of the *haredi* community in Israel.

1.1 Methodological Considerations

From a methodological point of view, all data and sources analyzed to develop the core of this research – i.e. the analysis of the professional and academic education of *haredi* women – can be divided in two categories: secondary sources and primary sources (Bruschi 1999). The majority of the sources I have considered in my research can be classified as secondary sources, i.e. sources whose data were collected for other purposes. These sources can be divided in: scientific publications, public surveys and surveys carried out by the public administration. As for scientific publications, it was only towards the end of the 20th century that Israeli scholars begun to be interested in and to publish researches on the issue of ultra-orthodox women's vocational and academic training. However, the information and data obtained from these sources take into consideration a limited number of cases, and it is for this reason that I have decided to integrate them with other sources: public surveys – mainly those carried out by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics – and surveys carried out by the public administration, in particular those of the Israeli Ministry of Education. Concerning primary sources, to gather and analyze the most updated and reliable information on the situation of *haredi* women's education, I collected in-depth interviews with scholars and, in parallel, with rabbis, educators in the ultra-orthodox school system (particularly from *Bayt Ya'acov* institutions and the *Michlalah Haredit*), and with *haredi* women in Jerusalem. I chose to analyses those interviews from a qualitative point of view only, given the limited number of interviews collected.

Finally, it should be specified that the Israeli *haredi* community is composed of a great number of groups and subgroups (*hasidim*, *mitnagdim*, *Ashkenazim*, *Sephardim* etc.), which makes it impossible to examine all of them. Therefore this study presents mainly mainstream *Ashkenazi haredim*, while sometimes considering *Sephardi haredim* as well.

2 *Haredi* Judaism in Israel

Ultra-orthodox (in Hebrew, *haredi*) Judaism is the most traditional and conservative stream of orthodox Judaism. From an historical point of view, it has its origins in the crisis of Jewish culture, which occurred in the last half of the 19th century, in Eastern Europe. It developed as a response to the growing diffusion of reformism, assimilationism and secularization among European Jewry (Katz 1978). After the Enlightenment and Jewish emancipation, the Holocaust catastrophe completely erased the traditional socio-cultural milieu of Eastern European Jewish communities which resettled in the Land of Israel. These circumstances contributed, both from a political and a social point of view, to the process leading to the development of an increasing stringency, i.e. *haredi* Judaism (Heilman, Friedman 1991). From a political perspective, during time emerged a pattern of obedience to a rabbinic authority. Nevertheless, this pattern did not envisioned any collective leadership, and each group complied to the directives of a spiritual leader endowed with the *da'as Torah* (the knowledge of the *Torah*) (Heilman 1992, p. 25), regarding both religious and political matters. From a sociological point of view, the principal distinctive feature of the *haredi* community in Israel, shaping all other life spheres, is the penchant for self-segregation (Friedman 1991; Heilman 1992; Tikochinski et al. 2010), to the point of constituting a separate and all-encompassing society. This tendency manifests itself in a series of social behaviors and processes, such as:

- a strong emphasis on family as a social unit, and on family life;
- the very central social position given to *Torah* study and education as central pillars of the community life;
- a segregationist ethos with separate cultural language including: the segregation of sexes, a mandatory dress code for men and women, and a different jargon and idiom peculiar to each community.

Over the last thirty years a huge growth characterized the *haredi* community in Israel. The increasing number of sub-communities and sectors, with different ideologies and costumes, made very complex to give a definition of who and what is '*haredi*'. In fact, living in close proximity fosters mutual influences, conflicts and change among different *haredi* groups. Today the *haredi* community is divided into two main streams: *Ashkenazi haredim* of European or American descent, and *Sephardi haredim* of Asian or North African descent. These groups are not homogeneous in the slightest and are divided in their turn into many subgroups and communities. This ethnic division is made extremely evident by separate political parties and educational systems, with the purpose of protecting and recreating the ethno-cultural division above mentioned (Caplan 2007). In addition to

that, the external boundaries between the *haredi* community and the non-*haredi* are becoming more and more blurred, making the «overall *Haredi* 'territory' more inclusive» (Tikochinski et al. 2010, p. 8). The complexity in defining who is *haredi*, and the absence of official data on the community, makes it difficult to provide an exact estimate of their number. Analyzing the latest data available (CBS 2013), it can be roughly assessed that the *haredi* population makes up for about the 10% of the total Israeli population, which means approximately 800,000 people.

2.1 Education in the *Haredi* Community

Education is considered one of the main tenets of *haredi* life. At the center of the educational process, stands the child which, within the *haredi* community, plays a fundamental role as carrier of the ultra-orthodox legacy and tradition. The main objective of the educational enterprise is to preserve the uniqueness of *haredi* culture, at almost any price. However, in an open, modern and pluralist society, such as the present Israeli society, all sorts of negative influences threaten to besiege and bombard unprotected individuals such as children. This is the main reason why schools were created as «sanctuaries, cultural strongholds, a sheltered environment where external influences are institutionally controlled» (Heilman 1992, p. 171). The basic principle *haredi* education tries to inculcate in its youth is the segregationist ethos, emphasizing the difference between the *Torah* observant and everyone else (Tikochinski et al. 2010, p. 21). Education thus plays a double role: it is at the same time the main purpose of *haredi* existence and a barrier against the decay of the *haredi* way of life, provoked by modern and secular influences. Learning the *Torah* is considered not as a part-time occupation, rather as a full time preoccupation. Especially for boys it is considered to be an endless religious obligation, placed above all others. Accordingly, *haredi* attitude towards secular education, training and employment has been quite negative. In particular, after the Holocaust, each *haredi* man felt responsible for the preservation of Jewish culture and tradition by means of studying the *Torah*.

At present, the *haredi* community lives in a state of continuos repudiation of the secular – modern values of the surrounding Israeli society. Yet, its existence is only made possible thanks to, and within such a society. In fact, it is precisely this secular and modern society, providing State allocations and the deferral of the military service, that allows the existence of the *haredi* society as we know it, giving *haredi* men the chance to extend their period of study virtually for their entire life. As a matter of fact, what today is regarded as the traditional social organization of the *haredi* community – the so-called «society of learners» (Friedman 1991, p. 55) – did not exist in Israel up until the 1950s. In the first *haredi* communities, men used

to study until marriage and then leave the *yeshiva* (Talmudic academy, in plural *yeshivot*) to find a work and support their families. The turning point was the year 1953. With the adoption of the National Education Act, the State of Israel took upon itself the responsibility for education, including the funding of independent recognized institutions affiliated with the ultra-orthodox party *Agudat Israel* (Maoz 2007). This was the beginning of the society of learners, which allowed men to completely devote themselves to *Torah* study without working, thanks to State allocations, stipends and the financial support of a multitude of *haredi* women educated in *Bayt Ya'acov* schools – *Agudat Israel*'s educational branch for girls – ready to marry and to support economically their husbands in their careers as *Torah* scholars.

The internal ethnic and political divisions within the ultra-orthodox community are also mirrored in its educational system, which is divided into various streams, and, most importantly, kept completely separate from secular, State education. Every group has its own institutions or even its own educational system. Reflecting the strict sex segregation in force within *haredi* society, schools are separated for boys and girls, running from pre-school through institutions of higher education, such as the *yeshiva* and the *kollel* (institution for advanced talmudic studies, in plural *kollelim*) for men, and seminars for young women.

As far as Israeli law is concerned, the *haredi* education system falls under the category of unofficial education. More precisely: recognized unofficial educational institutions and 'exempt' institutions (Shiffer 1999, p. 3). According to the degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the State, and their compliance to the core curriculum of the Education Ministry, these schools receive funding from the State of Israel. The two main recognized unofficial educational networks serving the *haredi* community are the Independent Education Network and the *ha-Ma'ayan* network. The former serving the *Ashkenazi* sector of the population, while the latter serves the *Sephardi* sector of the population, *haredi* and non-*haredi* alike. Finally, schools belonging to the second group, i.e. 'exempt' institutions, enjoy a wider degree of autonomy from the Ministry of Education. However, to receive State funding – on average half of the money allocated per pupil to State schools – these institutions have to comply to certain safety and health requirements.

At present, the *haredi* educational system includes institutions for every age level. Boys study mainly or only sacred subjects, while girls are allowed to take on secular studies such as foreign languages, computer science and accounting, and are tested in full matriculation examination (Shiffer 1999, p. 36). The educational track for male students is divided into five age groups, while for girls it is divided into four age groups. Boys attend kindergarten, or *heder*, up to age 5, where they learn to read and write. Afterwards, they proceed to a *Talmud Torah*, age 5 to 13, corresponding to a elementary school, where they study Bible in the lower grades,

commentaries and rabbinical analysis. From age 13 to age 16 boys transfer to a lower *yeshiva* or *yeshiva ketana*, where they study the *Talmud* all day long. At age 17 until marriage boys transfer again to the higher *yeshiva* or *yeshiva gedola*, where they spend on average some more four or five years, usually under boarding school conditions. After marriage they continue their studies in a *kollel*, a school for married men where they receive a small stipend as long as they are enrolled.

Concerning girls, in *Bayt Ya’acov* schools the educational track is divided into four age groups: kindergarten or preschool for children up to 5 years, continuing in elementary school, from 5 to 13, and then in secondary school, from 14 to 18. Finally, at the end of secondary school there is the possibility to continue with teacher-training courses. These courses will get the girls a degree as licensed teachers, or will allow them to attend professionalizing seminars in different subjects, such as computer technology and bookkeeping.

3 *Haredi* Women: The Private and Public Sphere

Life in the *haredi* community is based on an essentialist understanding of reality, as far as gender roles are concerned. According to this perception, biological and physical differences between sexes are determinant for the characterization of gender and family roles (Hardacre 1993, p. 129). Gender categorization is seen as a manifest, ongoing and explicitly significant for the course of the life. Therefore, the declared *haredi* ideology speaks of inequality between sexes, defined as «differentiation» (El-Or 2005, p. 134), and social roles and tasks are assigned accordingly. This view rests its basis on Jewish law, the *halakhah* (collective body of Jewish religious laws), which mirrors with its precepts and obligations (*mitzvot*) a gendered division of roles. According to the *halakhah*, men are obliged to fulfill a number of positive commandments, the most important of which is studying the *Torah*. Women, on the other hand, are exempted from the observation of most commandments and are entrusted with the care of the children and the household. Women are thus cut off from the main sources of power in *haredi* society – prayer and study – and relegated to the private, familial domain (El-Or 1993).

In the last decades – from 1990 to present – however, this ideology, based on the ‘natural order of things’, has been called into question on a daily basis by the reality surrounding the community, i.e. the modern Israeli society, of which the *haredim* are an integral part. This gap between the ideological framework and reality creates numerous tensions regarding women’s role both within the *haredi* community, and with respect to their relationship to the surrounding secular and modern society.

3.1 *Haredi* Women: Education, Training and Employment

The grounds for the rising of the discourse linking women's education and emancipation, lay in the history of *haredi* women educational system, especially in its rationale.

Until the end of the 19th century, girls' education used to be neglected among Jewish religious communities of Eastern Europe. Generally, girls attended secular public schools and learned the traditional knowledge they needed at home, from their mother. Yet this system proved to be ineffective. With the advent of Jewish enlightenment (*haskalah*) and assimilation, girls started to question Jewish religious values and traditions, and used their new secular education to influence the environment they lived in. The traditional figure of the modest Jewish woman and wife was about to change abruptly, with all the consequences such an upheaval could provoke (Weissman 1976). In this regard, Tamar El-Or writes: «The orthodox community was provoked into establishing formal education for women, in order to counter the process of secularization and general education that was experienced by most European Jews. [...] In attempt to circumvent the process of education, orthodoxy had no choice but to become part of it. *Haredi* women begun to study» (1994, p. 200). It is with these premises that the *Bayt Ya'acov* educational system for girls was founded in Poland at the beginning of the 20th century, and expanded itself to reach its present dimensions. The main aim of the *Bayt Ya'acov* system was, and still is, to form generations of women able and willing to enter the work force so to allow their husbands to devote all their time to study traditional religious texts. As previously explained, the structure of the educational track for *haredi* girls is almost the same, in terms of age partition, as that of boys. Differently from boys though, girls' education is organized, at least in theory, according to modern Western pedagogic methods. The *haredi* character is due to the enrollment, limited to *haredi* girls only, and to the curriculum of sacred studies, adapted to the *haredi* ideology. The curriculum gives priority to religious subjects both in terms of value, and in terms of hours dedicated. In general, subjects such as history and science are treated from the standpoint of the *haredi* community.

At first, in the 1950s and in the 1960s, *Bayt Ya'acov* institutions produced teachers for the *haredi* community school system. The data from the Labor Force Survey of the Central Bureau of Statistics prove that education is the main field of employment for *haredi* women. Especially in the age group 35-54, the share of *haredi* women employed in the education sector is 34.7%, versus a 16.7% of secular women of the same age group employed in the same sector. However, from the 1970s on, *Bayt Ya'acov* curricula gradually widened, teaching girls a range of clerical works. This happened because, due to the huge demographic growth of the community, the school system could not provide enough work opportunities for all of the *Bayt Ya'acov*

graduates. As a result, from the 1990s onwards, a growing number of women was employed outside the community in companies and institutions as secretaries, bookkeepers and so forth.

According to Jacob Lupu (2005), and his study on academic education and vocational training in the *haredi* sector in Israel, the year 1996 can be considered the turning point with respect to *haredi* attitude towards vocational training and employment. In fact, from the end of the 1990s on a certain acceptance of secular studies began to be felt within the ultra-orthodox community (Lupu 2005, p. 12). This was the consequence of a variety of social, economic and political factors, both internal and external to the community, that pushed it towards openness. Among them:

- the increasing poverty of most families associated to the restriction of income support payments and financial help from the family;
- the reduction of the age of exemption from army service for *haredi* men;
- the increasing number of young men not able, nor willing, to pursue *Torah* studies for their entire lives, thus having the necessity to find a job;
- a change in the fundamental values underpinning the *haredi* community and the penetration of the consumer culture even in this most conservative environment;
- the increased need for *haredi* professionals to serve the community;
- the will of the Israeli Government to make the *haredi* community more independent from an economic point of view.

In such a situation, the rabbis recognized the financial need of the community to earn its own living, but, at the same time, they wanted to control this potentially dangerous instrument – general education – and placed it under their jurisdiction and strict supervision, controlling all educational frameworks and institution offering vocational training and academic education to the *haredi* public. Furthermore, the development of *haredi* vocational training institutions was made possible also thanks to the Government's recognition of the need to include *haredi* population in the mainstream workforce, and the sponsorship of the Ministries of Labor, Industries and Commerce, Education and numerous non-profit organizations, such as the Joint, supporting Jewish education.

In particular, regarding women, the solutions devised to face the occupational crisis were mainly two. First, to channel women employment to a small number of other occupations that were considered suitable, such as sales within the community, or graphic and clerical jobs that could be carried out within the community or in telecommuting (Blumen 2002). The second solution devised was to make women employable also in the mainstream labor market. As a consequence, new vocational training tracks and

academic courses were opened to give young women the chance to acquire financial knowledge and technological skills. To prevent them from attending non-*haredi* institutions, a number of *haredi* colleges was established. These colleges, considered a solution to keep the girls within an *haredi* environment for the whole duration of their training, offer girls graduating from secondary school, the possibility enroll in vocational training or academic courses, where to achieve a post-secondary education.

At present, the institutions of higher education for *haredi* girls offer both vocational training and academic education according to the demand. To be suitable for the *haredi* public those institutions had to fulfill a series of conditions. Above all: an environment strictly *haredi* as for behavior, attire and times of prayer; and the organization of classes in separate locations, or in different days of the week for men and women. The institutions for girls' education, as those for boys, can be divided in: institutions for *haredim* only; *haredi* frameworks in religious institutions and *haredi* frameworks in secular institutions. The main difference among these types of institutions consists in the fact that the frameworks for *haredim* only are run under the supervision of a spiritual committee and of a rabbinical authority; while the others do not undergo any rabbinical supervision. From an academic point of view, all courses offered within the framework of the aforementioned institutions are conceived by recognized academic bodies, such as State colleges or universities, and thus approved, directly or indirectly, by the Ministry of Education. Among the courses offered by *haredi* colleges: social work, psychology, social sciences, medical laboratory science, management and dispute resolution, computer engineering and science, electro-optics engineering, computer science and so forth. The most renown institutions for *haredim* only, offering vocational training courses for girls are: the *Haredi* Center for Technological Studies (*ha-Merchaz ha-Haredi le-Hachsharah Mikzo'it*); the *Haredi* College of Bnei Brak (*Mivhar or Michlalat Bnei Brak ha-Akademit*) and The *Haredi* College in Jerusalem (*ha-Michlalah ha-Haredit Yerushalaim*).

Following the massive development of *haredi* colleges, parallel vocational training programs were established in *Bayt Ya'acov* seminars as well. This was done partially to maintain the educational monopoly *Bayt Ya'acov* had, and partially to counter the diffusion of institutions such as the colleges, not always strictly mainstream *haredi*. According to some interviews collected from *Bayt Ya'acov* educators, these new vocational training programs were not accurately planned at the beginning. However, in the last few years these programs, and the curricula more in general, are being updated and revised to adapt them to the demands of the modern world. As Tzipi, one of the women I interviewed – a former *Bayt Ya'acov* educator – said:

First of all they are trying to make a lot of things more attractive [...]

> let’s say for many years, for the girls who stayed there two more years to become a teacher or something […] in a way it was very neglected let’s say […] not a lot of thought was put into it, not a lot of energy was put into it, not a lot of money was put into it. Now they are trying to make it really interesting and really attractive. Let’s say before, if you wanted to study to be a teacher you could choose to study one subject, now if you study to be a teacher you study to be a teacher in math AND english AND literature AND[…] you really have an option to do something real about it. Or if you do computer engineering, you do it in a system at a very good level, you get out and you have a way into the labor market, or also graphic design or other subjects that once upon a time did not existed in the system. And this because there is such a pressure to move ahead. I have talked recently to the director who told me that now there is a big pressure to put in new subjects, just to keep the girls from going to other colleges that are, you know, getting control on the girls and they have a lot of influence on them. (Foscarini 2014)

The vocational training courses generally offered by *Bayt Ya’acov* institutions are: computerized office work, bookkeeping, architecture, interior design (Lupu 2005, p. 99). The distinctive trait of *Bayt Ya’acov* training programs is that girls are given the opportunity to take the certification examinations of the Ministry of Labor, thus obtaining an officially recognized degree to actually practice the profession they were trained to teach. It should be also specified that the vocational training programs in *Bayt Ya’acov* are always a complementary part to the teacher-training courses.

3.2 The Paradox of *Haredi* Women’s Education and the Renegotiation of Gender Roles

At present, it can be said that women’s education and participation to the workforce has become a permanent and essential feature of the society of learners. Yet, there is an evident clash between the figure of the modern, working *haredi* woman and the classical patriarchal paradigm where the ideal woman restricts her activities to the sphere of the household. In the *haredi* community, the primary male model – that of man learning *Torah* all his life – still holds a powerful place both in the communal life and the family sphere. Accordingly, the female model – that of an educated woman supporting financially the household – is purposely kept subordinated and dependent on male figures. «The ultra-orthodox modern discourse greatly influences the principles of the gender prestige system of the community» (Blumen 2002, p. 146), legitimizing the predominance of ultra-orthodox masculinity by rewarding men with public stipends for their study activity, while not recognizing women’s primary unpaid role as mothers and house-

wives. In this respect, the concept of «educated and ignorant», referred to the *haredi* woman is illuminating. It was coined by Tamar El-Or (1994), and expresses at best the paradox women's education represents in the *haredi* world. On one side, girls' and women's education is considered a central task, with an important function of social control, requiring dedication and much efforts. On the other, it is defined as 'education for ignorance' for two main reasons. First, because, being denied access to the *Talmud*, women cannot be considered educated, according to ultra-orthodox standards. Second because, in spite of, and thanks to, the education given to them, women are expected to act as 'ignorant', staying faithful to the pre-assigned role of housewives and mothers they are given. According to the ethnographical study carried out by El-Or, this educational paradox characterizing women's literacy in *haredi* society operates on two levels. The first is defined «literacy for knowledge, through which women learn about the world in which they live», and the second, «literacy for ignorance, through which women learn how they are to behave in this world» (El-Or 1993, p. 72).

Therefore, within the paradigm of the society of learners, women are educated to be good wives and mothers and to keep a low profile: in a word to be modest. Modesty is considered one of the most important characteristics to understand the social and personal existence of the *haredi* women. As Tamar El-Or puts it: «the importance of a woman's reputation [given by its modesty] is an insurance policy that ensures that the woman will not take her contacts with the outside too far» (2005, p. 145). In fact, women are the main contact point with the surrounding, secular world and, as a consequence, they need to be educated in accordance with an ideal model which is the opposite of the feminine traits common to the surrounding society. Hence, the educational system for girls, is developed in line with these conceptions, to produce women capable of being the link between the community and the surrounding secular world, the main breadwinners of the family and, at the same time, preserving the community reputation. This aspect, concerning the preservation of women's reputation, is substantial, because women are considered responsible not only of the biological reproduction of the community, but, as essentially, of the reproduction of its cultural and symbolical dimension (Yuval Davis 1996).

In relation to women's reputation, it is interesting to highlight how, culturally, the *haredi* community gives full priority and much more credit to the profession of teacher. This is explained by the multiple advantages of working in the education sector for married women with children, and, above all, by the social balance it provides to the community. The main reason why teaching is such a respected profession, is the social control and moral supervision women are subjected to, both by their peers and the entire community. This viewpoint is also confirmed by some parents and educators working in the field of higher education in the *haredi* community.

During an interview, Hannah, a former principal of the *Michlalah Haredi*, confirmed this trend by saying:

> Teaching was the best thing for women and it still is, it hasn’t changed. I see my daughter’s teacher, it is very good for women [...] it is the first thing a woman wants to do. It is changing, but still among men the *talmid chacham* (wise scholar) is the best, and among women the teacher is the best, this has not changed. (Foscarini 2014)

The interesting point and the main contradiction of this social system is that it is the same education women are given, and that is supposed to keep them ‘ignorant’, that allows them to negotiate over the boundaries between their role as mothers and housewives and their functions of mediators between the *haredi* community and the surrounding Israeli society, gaining more independence and freedom with respect to their social background, but still remaining grounded on it.

The situation developed significantly in the last two decades (1990s-2000s), where most school curricula were enhanced and a wider range of educational opportunities, especially vocational training tracks, were offered to *haredi* girls after high school. As a consequence, women had more chances to find a job outside the community, and this generated many internal issues and disturbances. Rabbis feared that women’s employment outside the boundaries of the community, and their contact with the secular and ‘corrupted’ world, may lead them to wish to develop more independence, at the expenses of their traditional role, with the risk of changing well-established social values and norms. This scenery is confirmed by a number of interviews to *haredi* women. In most cases they consider women’s paid work as just a tool, a means to achieve an end: allow their husbands to study and to become great *Torah* scholars. However, they seemed to have a positive attitude towards vocational training and work outside the community as well, considering them as empowering tools for women. This contradictory conception was made very clear to me during an interview with Tzipi, a very young woman and a former *Bayt Ya’acov* educator. She said:

> My husband is not working and I am supporting, so all the girls are studying professions. But there are traditional professions like teacher [...] and other professions, within the normal [...] professions where you don’t build a career [...] you work and it goes along with the family lifestyle [...] I mean, in the *Bayt Ya’acov* system you are taught profession you will be able to work with, but it’s not geared towards the career. It is an interesting work, a satisfying work, but it’s work, it’s clear that your self-fulfilment is being a wife, a mother, it’s just work. It’s a tool. (Foscarini 2014)

But later she added:

> There is a lot of talking about it [working outside the community]. First, the school system tries to prevent the girls [from working outside the community], which I personally think is wrong, and tell them you can make less money and keep intact your tradition and the purity of your family […] and it's so much safer […] and so forth […] there is a lot of talking about it. (Foscarini 2014)

Another women, Shoshana, working in *Bayt Ya'acov* as well, when asked if she thought that a change in the curricula would have mirrored a change in the role *haredi* women play within the community, said:

> This is a good question. I think that it is for sure mirroring some sort of change. I feel that women's position is strong to begin with, but this change is going to make her position even stronger, and I think this is going to change the way she sees her family. I think that more family planning is going to come now and that family sizes will shrink, families will change. Women are not just giving in to their husbands stupidity, they are going to have a more strong say, and more demands towards their husbands, I think it will change a lot. (Foscarini 2014)

The statements above, reveal a contradictory attitude *haredi* women have regarding work outside the community, and regarding their role with respect to family life and house management. From a theoretical point of view women are expected to put as their first priority their family and the household. However, it seems as though the discourse has shifted from a clear definition of borders between family and work on the part of *haredi* women, to a more fluid situation where women are looking in the first place for a more proactive role within the family, and secondly for a more fulfilling and satisfying job, allowing them to build a career of their own as well. Against this background, it can be definitely maintained that education has played, and is going to play, a big role both in relation to women's position, and with respect to their relationship with the Israeli society and the *haredi* community, changing the way young women perceive themselves and their social role.

Another big issue that emerged during the fieldwork is how *haredi* women are able to harmonize their role of mothers and housewives with their working life, at the same time keeping the family together. It appeared that this is made possible first and foremost, thanks to *haredi* women's great negotiation skills, allowing them, to reconcile the 'inner world' – that of house and family – with the 'outer', secular, working environment, even if at a great personal cost. A second strategy *haredi* women enact, even in a very implicit and indirect way, is to put more pressure on their husbands,

demanding greater domestic involvement on their part, in return for the financial support they provide to the family. Precisely these demands, are the decisive element that is beginning to subvert the feminine categorization of the domestic sphere, at the same time weakening traditional masculinity and moulding new schemes in *haredi* gender and family relationships. It is undeniable that this evolution requires a big adaptation of the society of learners model to a new configuration of *haredi* family where an educated and working woman runs the family, together with her husband. Here the keyword is ‘together’, and it points at a change in the conception young *haredi* couples have of their lives and of the family they are going to form. One of the women I interviewed explained:

> It’s changing, it’s challenging, it’s a new thing. It’s completely a new world. It’s like confronting a new world, materialism, enjoying your marriage in a way that before was not even thought of. Before, marriage was like a factory: getting married, having children to continue the dynasty. It was not about you having a good time. Yes, you are having a good time, but this is not it. This is not what is meant for, marriage. I think all over the world, is considered like something that it’s needed to be done. You are not exactly expected to become best friends, yes you do have fun, yes you do have to enjoy sex, but this is not what it is for, you know? I think that the best illustration for it [this new conception of marriage] is that women never took their husband to the child birth, they always took their mother, their sisters. It’s like two separate spheres. It was like my relationships, my love, my connections are with my sisters, my mother, my friends […] and I am married with my husband because this is what we do […] Now it’s kind of normal to be with your husband when you give birth, because this is *our* thing, *we* bring together children, *we* raise them together, *we* have a relationship with each other, and girls are looking at marriage in a different way. It’s not just about having children, it’s about having a *friend*. (Foscarini 2014)

Another one said:

> No no here it’s very common [fathers being involved in family life]. I think in the *haredi* community even more. Because women are working, so the father is the one who sends kids to school, the one who picks them up, the one warming the meals, if not cooking the meals, my husband is the one cooking the meals (laughs). They are very involved. (Foscarini 2014)

From the statements of the women interviewed, it is clear that a big change is undergoing within the *haredi* community in Israel. Women play a role of active agents and actors in the definition of their role and image. And it

is precisely the education they received that permitted them to overlook social and religious constraints and to build for themselves a new space for action. Because, even though they accept a priori the subordinated role the dominant social ideology assigns them, they question it continuously with their every day experiences, «carrying out social activities that overstep the declared ideology and infusing them with themes and behaviors that stem from their existence» (El-Or 2005, p. 134). In fact, in spite of the huge burden imposed on *haredi* women, both material and ideological, they increasingly participate in the public life, by getting an education and supporting the society of learners, while trying to change it with their daily deeds.

4 Conclusions

From the establishment of the State of Israel onwards, the *haredi* community has rebuilt and rehabilitated itself not only on a spiritual level, but also on a more concrete plane, reconstructing its material culture and developing into what is effectively a Western technological consumer society (Tikochinski et al. 2010, p. 39). Changes may be noticed in many spheres of *haredi* life that are going to draw the *haredi* community closer to the secular Israeli society around it. The contemporary *haredi* society in Israel is thus adopting a pragmatic approach towards modernity and, according to some scholars, the most modern sectors of *haredi* society are already undergoing an increasing process of «Israelianization», internalizing values and behavioral patterns of the Israeli culture (Tikochinski et al. 2010, p. 39). Among the transformations leading the *haredi* community towards modernity, the most important and influential is the evolution of the educational system, which is linked to the change in the status of women and to the renegotiation of gender and family roles. Focusing on secular education and vocational training, it may be asked how the developments described in this paper have a chance to turn into something more permanent and significant in the future. According to Yacob Lupu: «there has indeed been a radical change in this sector [secular education] in everything that pertains to external studies and higher education» however, «the process of change will be a long, drawn-out affair. Shortcuts will not work» (2005, p. 120).

With regard to women’s education and social position, some great changes are occurring within the *haredi* community. Even though the pronounced ideology of the community speaks of conservatism and growing segregation, the findings presented in this study show that women, by accepting the socio-cultural framework they are born in – which identifies them as subordinated – are using their education and literacy to change the environment surrounding them. Thanks to the education offered, they

are actively participating to the construction of their social position and cultural reality. *Haredi* women present themselves as stronger, more co-operative and proactive women, indispensable for the functioning of the *haredi* social system.

Women are slowly making a shift from a traditional set of values more tied to 'the inner world' of the community, to a more secular set of values, rather linked to 'the outer, secular world', giving more importance to the individual, rather then to the communal (Foscarini 2014). The change in the educational and working sphere, has led necessarily to a change in the domestic sphere, causing a re-adaptation of gender roles within the *haredi* family. *Haredi* women, even if in a implicit way, respectful of the gender roles assigned by *haredi* communal norms, are putting more pressure on their husbands, demanding from them greater domestic involvement. By asking their husbands to take away time from their study activity they are questioning, even if in the most indirect way, their masculinity and their role within family and society. Of course, this pattern is not valid for all women, and a great number, if not the majority of them, is still employed within the community, or not employed at all, their families depending completely on State support and charity. Nevertheless, in my opinion, this substantial evolution in the relationships between men and women within the community, is the sign that some substantial change is taking place.

In conclusion, the elements outlined above speak of a deep transformation the *haredi* community is undergoing. A small group of people, changing the traditional *haredi* ways, is the pioneer of a widespread social change the *haredi* community will see in the future. What remains to be seen is how the majority of the community and its most traditional sectors will counter this modernization process, and how the Israeli Government will adjust its policies and attitudes toward an *haredi* community more and more present within the Israeli society.

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'Coalition Politics' and Regional Steadfastness
The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) Between 1983 and 1984

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Abstract After the evacuation from Beirut in late 1982, the PFLP tries to formulate new policy patterns, both at the Palestinian and the regional level, in order to present its own alternative, opposing Arafat's attempts to start direct negotiations with Israel under US sponsorship. Despite all the efforts made, the PFLP fails to effectively implement its agenda and results weakened at the end of this phase vis-à-vis Fatah-PLO leadership. From this, stems the necessity to report and assess PFLP's line and narrative during such a critical phase. The systematic study of PFLP's official publications (communiqués, congress resolutions, interviews released by the leaders, etc.), in the framework of the broader historiography on the Arab-Israeli conflict, is the methodology employed to achieve these goals. PFLP's official documentation, published by the party's mouthpiece Al-Hadaf, can be retrieved at the library of the Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut.

1 Introduction

The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the three-month long siege on the capital represent a crossroad for the whole Palestinian Liberation Organization. Forced to evacuate from Beirut and deprived of its military and civil infrastructures in Lebanon, the PLO seeks the road toward a new strategy to gain its main goal of liberating Palestine. However, the debate on the agenda for the new stage is a catalyst for historic rifts within the PLO: its leadership, that is Fatah, devotes itself to a diplomatic strategy which entails a rapprochement with Egypt and Jordan, favorable to a political settlement of the conflict with Israel, and sees the United States as the only power able to guarantee an agreement. The PLO leftist opposition instead, with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine at its

forefront, rejects the idea of a political path leading to a peace agreement with the Zionist enemy. A political settlement under US tutelage and in collaboration with the Jordanian and Egyptian regimes would mean the complete marginalization of PFLP’s revolutionary line within the PLO. Indeed, the PFLP always distinguished itself within the PLO for its hard-line positions vis-à-vis the confrontation with Israel and its global revolutionary views, according to which the Palestinian liberation movement should not only aim to the liberation of the homeland but also to achieve a socialist revolution all over the Arab east. Another distinctive trait of the PFLP is also its well-defined and quite rigid political doctrine which absorbed the experience of several revolutionary movements like Maoism and Guevarism. These features contrast in particular with Fatah generic nationalism which however, ensured to Arafat’s organization a wider popularity, and are also at the base of PLO internal divisions resurfacing with unprecedented strength in the aftermath of 1982 Lebanon War. In the light of this considerations, it is clear why the PFLP, throughout 1983 and 1984 sought to put into practice a radical alternative to Fatah diplomatic strategy, looking for coordination with other leftist faction, the DFLP first of all, and aligning itself with Syria at the regional level and with the USSR at the global one. Nevertheless, both external factors such as Syrian will to exploit the opposition to liquidate Arafat and take over the PLO, and internal ones, like the inability to build a cohesive leftist front to restrain Arafat’s autocratic drift, undermined PFLP’s effort and led to the failure of its post-Lebanon agenda sealed by 1985 Arafat-Hussein agreement to form a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation for possible negotiation.

The importance of studying the PFLP relies on the fact that so far, scholarly works on the PLO focus on its mainstream, namely Fatah, giving to the Popular Front the space of a secondary actor (Sayigh 1989; Cobban 1984). For their part, those works treating specifically PLO internal dialogue illustrate some PFLP’s position with more details, but always tend to highlight Fatah evolution and adaptability vis-à-vis a quickly changing context (Gresh 1988; Sahliyeh 1986). To date, only one monograph was consecrated to Habash’s party addressing mainly its structure and ideology (Cubert 1997) and one article outlining PFLP decision-making process and internal contradictions (AbuKhalil 1987). Conversely, a significant number of studies has been dedicated to PFLP precursor, the Arab Nationalists Movement, illustrating its formation, the ideological evolution from rightist nationalism to Marxism and finally its demise leading to the emergence of national offshoots among which the PFLP (Kazziha 1975; Al-Kubeisi 1977; Barut 1997). In some of these latter works, the first years of the PFLP are addressed but again, little attention has been paid to this faction during later phases, especially to the years of decline which led to today’s marginalization. In Palestine itself, the subject of the decline of the left has been partly treated (Hilal 2009; Ladadwe 2014) but not the specific case of single organizations. Therefore to fill these lacks, a study

of PFLP's course in its more recent years is key. Such a study should focus on the choices and the policies adopted by the Popular Front to counter its own weakening and to preserve a decisive influence within the PLO. Hence, this essay is a first attempt to address the gaps of historiography concentrating on the period when the problem of marginalization emerged forcibly and the PFLP made its first attempts to resist it.

2 The Popular Front Resettles in Damascus

2.1 The Rapprochement with Syria

The forced choices made after September 1982 by PLO leadership to establish a new base in Tunis and by the PFLP to settle in Damascus were both signs of a serious weakening that led every faction inside the Palestinian national movement to accept some unprecedented compromises. Unlike in the aftermath of 1971 eviction from Jordan, the Palestinian armed organizations had no hope to find in Tunisia, nor in Syria, the favorable conditions encountered in Lebanon. Yasser Arafat decided to bet on his diplomatic strategy and he needed as much independence as possible for his initiative in order to open a new course in PLO's relations with Egypt and Jordan: the price to pay was an exile-like base in Tunis and the risk of major splits inside the Liberation Organization (Sahliyeh 1986, pp. 87-91). On the other hand, the PFLP could not afford to deny completely its two-decades long radical stand and, in the current situation, Syria was the only State in the Arab east adopting a 'steadfast' position toward the conflict. The PFLP knew that it was losing much of its independence and freedom of action while moving to Damascus but its adherence to a radical strategy did not leave much room for other possibilities. In other words, the PFLP was unable to compete within the framework of the 'Jordanian option' that prevailed in post-Lebanon period in the ranks of the PLO: this definition has been used to define PLO leadership decision to shift its attention and presence toward the Occupied Territories and Jordan and toward a political strategy, abandoning the military approach that dominated the previous decade (Khalidi 1985b, p. 90). For its part, the Popular Front had some significant implantations in the Occupied Territories, but the bulk of its mass support was still in the Beirut refugee camps and in Syrian controlled Lebanese areas as well as in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus. From this stemmed PFLP's reluctance to leave Lebanon and the decision to settle in Syria as for the Party the proximity to the occupied homeland was not only a matter of propaganda but also one of strategic importance.

However, every Arab State that directly dealt with Palestinian armed presence never had the intention to allow to the PLO a full autonomy of ac-

tion and Syria was no exception. President Hafiz al-Assad in particular was highly averse to Arafat freedom of action at least since the disruption of the Lebanese civil war; after 'Egypt's historic 'betrayal' in 1979 Syria's main goal in its regional policy was the creation of a bloc formed with Lebanon and the PLO in order to break its isolation and reach a hegemonic position (Hinnebusch 1986, p. 13). As the PLO chairman seemed always more committed to the Jordan option, Syria tried to influence Palestinian policies in the new stage through PLO opposition groups based in Damascus, notably the PFLP: in this phase the Popular Front could not but accept that its goals coincided with Syrian ones.

In the first aftermath of Israel's invasion, the PFLP and Syria objectives became actually closer mainly due to their opposition to American efforts to implement a political settlement between Lebanon and Israel, which was comprehensive also of the withdrawal of all foreigners forces: an equation that put on the same level Israeli, Syrian and Palestinian armed presence on the Lebanese territory. The signature of the Lebanese-Israeli agreement of the 17th May 1983 definitely seemed to put the Palestinians and Syria in the same camp and the PFLP grasped the occasion to call for the development of a common strategy with Syria and the Lebanese National Movement: the PFLP, alongside Syria, refused the linkage of Israeli and Syrian forces withdrawal and asked a unilateral Israeli withdrawal instead. Moreover, the Party thought that an increased level of military coordination with Syria was also needed because it was not possible to exclude another Israeli blow in order to liquidate the last obstacles to the normalization of its relations with Lebanon. At this regard, the PFLP estimated that Israel could resort to confessional divisions in order to deliver the final attack to Syria and the Palestinian revolution, therefore the alliance with the biggest 'nationalist' force operating in Lebanon, appeared as the best way to prepare for defense (PFLP Information Department 1983, p. 105).

However, the 1976 Syrian intervention against the PLO in Lebanon was not that far and the PFLP had to make an important effort of pragmatism to justify such an alliance. In addition, the Popular Front historically, has defined its linkages with Syria and all other «nationalist regimes» at the same time as of «alliance and conflict». On the one hand, the PFLP considered those regimes as allies in case of direct confrontation with Israel. On the other, the Arab nationalist states, due to their ruling «petit-bourgeois elites» did not look with favor at PFLP's all-out revolutionary project and disliked its military strategy, namely guerilla warfare, as this could vehicle its revolutionary calls in the countries where it was operating (PFLP Information Department 1972, pp. 70-78). Therefore, the situation emerged after 1982 required also a theoretical reformulation of PFLP's positions toward Syria.

At this regard, the Party, could count on the lessons of the most impor-

tant Marxist forces worldwide: for example, in this case, Maoist doctrine on primary and secondary inconsistencies allowed the PFLP to be flexible in its foreign policy and to adapt to a continuously changing situation of conflict (Tse-Tung 1967, pp. 311-345). After 1982, the PFLP could not afford to adopt a conflicting stand with Syria, therefore, contradictions with the Syrian regime, although always on the ground, automatically became less important and justified the pursuit of a greater entente with Assad. In addition this rapprochement with Syria was not just dictated by a post-war urgent necessity: it was the result of internal pressure by the pro-Syrian group led by Abu Ali Mustafa, PFLP’s deputy Secretary-General. After the stroke that hit Habash in 1979, his leadership started to lose weight in the decision making process while Mustafa’s group raised in importance. This internal current, from that moment on, tried as much as it could to align the Party with Syria’s plans for the conflict (AbuKhalil 1987, pp. 367-369).

Since the PFLP found almost all of its mass-based support from Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, the weight of their opinion in Party’s policies was preponderant if compared to that of Palestinians exiled in other Arab country or living in the Occupied Territories: for these reasons the perception they had of Syria’s role in Lebanon received more attention by PFLP leadership. Syria’s image among both Lebanese and Palestinians positively changed after the Israeli invasion. Before Israel’s military operation Syria was much more perceived as simply another actor who wanted to impose its interests and hoped to benefit from the conflict. Although one cannot speak of a full support to the Syrian regime, the direct confrontation with the Zionist enemy mitigated the negative image that was attached to Syria intervention in Lebanon since 1976: the Syrian forces were an Arab army that was now directly opposed to the major enemy. This shift in people’s perception of Syria revealed useful for the PFLP in presenting the coordination with Syria as a natural development of the ongoing war, not only against Israel’s proxies but also directly against Zionist forces

Furthermore, despite the hard setback that Syria underwent during its short military confrontation with Israel in summer 1982 and its consequent withdrawal from the Chouf and south Lebanon, the Syrian Army still owned a remarkable military potential as the Soviet Union did not hesitate to replenish its depleted arsenals. As a consequence, although Syria could not compete with Israel’s military supremacy, it could easily impose an overwhelming balance of power to the different militias in the Lebanese occupied territories. In fact, Syria involvement in Lebanon was characterized by the use of force against armed factions in situation of crushing favorable balance, the Palestinians knew it and the PFLP had no intention to defy Syria’s strategy (Khalidi 1985a, pp. 506-508).

2.2 Defending Soviet Prestige: PFLP’s Search for USSR Support

Further divisions inside the PLO were fostered by the debate over the role of the Soviet Union in the Arab-Israeli conflict and more precisely over the importance of PLO alliance with the USSR in the wake of Israel’s invasion and reoccupation of Lebanon. The PFLP was concerned by a decrease of Soviet prestige within the Palestinian political arena: while none of the fedayin organizations overtly raised doubts on the alliance with the Soviet Union, some independent members of the council, as for example Shafik al-Hout, highlighted Soviet ambiguous support for the PLO and its low consideration of the alliance with the Palestinian National Movement (Abu-Lughod 1983, p. 39). Therefore the PFLP, beside the DFLP and PFLP-GC, committed itself to the defense of USSR’s role in the region. Actually, at this regard during its 16th PNC speech, held in Algiers in from 14 to 22 February 1983, Habash referred to the Soviet Union to declare that

> All the questions about what the USSR did during the siege aimed at dividing the Palestinian revolution from their natural allies. I invite this council to declare our clear distinction between our imperialist, Zionist and reactionary enemies and our friends from the socialist countries and the world national liberation movement. (Al-Hadaf 1983c, pp. 6-9)

The Party feared that these «negative tendencies» could gain popularity inside the PLO and firmly denounced those declarations that affirmed that «the key of the conflict was in American hands». These positions were strengthening the «imperialist plans» of settlement by trying to marginalize the importance of the major world actor engaged in the opposition to US expansion (PFLP Information Department 1983, p. 123). At the end of the PNC, the PLO stated once more the strategic role played by the Soviet Union in supporting liberation movements worldwide and formally reaffirmed USSR influence on the Palestinian arena: this is to be considered a concession to the leftist opposition made by a PLO leadership which was always more disenchanted toward Soviet role (Galia Golan 1986, pp. 288-289).

After the signing of the 1979 Camp David accords, the USSR decided to improve its relations with the PLO in order to counterbalance the loss of Egypt and its transition toward the Western camp. This moment coincided also with an improvement of Soviet Union’s relations with the PFLP. Once very critical toward USSR’s stands about some central questions of the conflict, the Popular front started to reduce its critics and showed a greater alignment with Soviet views of Middle Eastern politics (Galia Golan 1983, p. 13): for instance during the 16th session of the PNC, the PFLP pressured for the rejection of the Reagan and Fahd peace plans while did not oppose the acceptance of the Brezhnev proposal of settlement. Actually, the latter was far from the Reagan plan as it recognized PLO’s role of unique repre-

sentative, but did not differ sensibly from the plan issued by the Saudi crown prince which instead was labeled by the Party as the «base for the final liquidation» (Al-Hadaf 1983d, p. 5). In other words the PFLP did not blackmail PLO leadership on the issue of the acceptance of any political solution of the conflict, de facto eliminating the main reason of discord with the Soviet Union which historically backed the idea of a partition of Palestine rather than fully support PLO's first long term goal to destroy Israel as a State (Ismael 2005, pp. 65, 76). One can better grasp the dimensions of this change in PFLP's positions if considers that, during the period of international aircrafts hijackings between 1968 and 1970 and even once this strategy had been abandoned, the Soviets considered the Popular Front a Maoist faction and accused it of «revolutionary adventurism», counter-productive to the advance of the Arab liberation movement (Harris 1977, p. 149).

Although the rapprochement was a sensible one, there were still several points of distance between Soviet projects for the Middle East and PFLP's understanding of the new phase. Nevertheless the Party avoided to stress or mention these discrepancies both in its press organs and in its political statements. In fact if the Popular Front was aligned on Syrian positions in rejecting any of Arafat's contacts with Egypt or Jordan, the Soviet Union was not a-priori opposed to some sort of Arafat-Hussein coordination or to the establishment of good relations between Mubarak and PLO chairman. Actually the USSR did not want to be completely excluded from possible peace negotiations and therefore was interested in presenting itself as a fundamental actor, even in the eyes of those countries that were moving closer to the Americans. Concerning the plan for a political settlements of the conflict, the only point of full agreement between the Soviets and Habash's party was the firm rejection of the Reagan plan: the USSR was playing a hard game of balances between its two most important allies, namely Syria and the PLO, and between the different components of the Palestine national movement (Freedman 1987, pp. 179-182).

The Soviet Union always showed its preference in supporting established governments rather than liberation movements, therefore despite the existing inconsistencies with Syria, it decided to enhance its relation with the Assad regime and to increase its presence in the country since early 1983. Nevertheless, Soviets did not envisage a Syrian-controlled PLO neither and consequently decided to improve the relations with Arafat as well in order to balance Syria's rejectionist stand. But beside that, the Soviets did not appreciate that PLO leadership did not totally close the door to the American administration. In such a context, the USSR was trying to maintain good relations with every possible actors in order not to preclude any possibility of action: this policy-pattern led the Soviet Union to give more importance and support to the rejectionist opposition inside the PLO, stressing on PFLP or DFLP position, rather than that of Fatah, over the Reagan plan (Galia Golan 1986, p. 192).

Unfortunately for the USSR this policy did not succeed in balancing support to its different allies and resulted in eventually fostering PLO internal split and hostility between the Palestinians and Syria: the civil war erupted during 1983 summer in Tripoli among Arafat loyalists and Syria-backed rebels represented the failure of this policy and became the worst scenario the Soviet Union could face.

2.3 The 'Strategic' Importance of Syrian-Soviet Axis

Given this fragile game of balances, the PFLP committed, before and after the Algiers PNC, to a propaganda effort aimed to present the viability of the alliance with Syria and the fundamental necessity to rely on the USSR and reject any American involvement.

The analyses published in PFLP's Al Hadaf focused on the continued role of opposition that Syria played during and after the war, towards Israel's aggressions and US attempt to impose a settlement. The stress was always on the positive stand that Syria was adopting at the Arab level as well as on the pressure that the Syrian Government was exercising on those regimes favorable to negotiations within the American pattern: Syria declared that it would attend upcoming Arab summits only to discuss the results reached until then, excluding any debate on possible alignment of Arab positions with the Reagan plan. Furthermore, the Assad regime was continually urging Jordan not to join American settlement negotiations. PFLP's account centered on the guarantee represented by Syrian armed presence in Lebanon: a precious guarantee of protection for PLO's interests. Before the Tripoli crisis, the PFLP also used to remark that Syrian-Palestinian relations were experiencing a «real operation of correction» since until then they were not «established on the right bases» (Al-Hadaf 1983e, pp. 4-5).

In its description of the important factors impeding the implementation of American conspiracies, the PFLP distinguished between direct factors and «helping» factors: while Syrian position was listed among the firsts, Soviet stand was considered part of the second group, in line with Soviet narrative over its intervention in Middle Eastern affairs, especially during the Israeli invasion. In Popular Front's views, progressive forces upgraded their relation with the Soviet Union because the «strategic alliance» between them had to reach the level of the «strategic collaboration» existing between the US and Israel. Moreover, Soviet increasing supplies of armaments to Syrian forces represented an important factors of deterrence thwarting any «further imperialist attempt» to obtain the end of Palestinian and military presence in Lebanon (Al-Hadaf 1983g, p. 11).

In this moment of shifting alliances, the Popular Front was trying to restitute a homogenous image of the Steadfastness Front, focusing on the element of accordance between its regional and international patrons. In

Party's narrative the Israeli invasion showed once more American unreliability which implied the unfeasibility of the diplomatic strategy. The clear step to take was full adherence to armed struggle, which in the new phase could only be carried through a greater reliance on the Syrian ally and its Soviet backer (Al-Hadaf 1983h, pp. 4-5). The inconsistencies between the renewed stress on the importance of armed struggle and the new posture toward Soviet peace proposal is to be explained mainly with two factors: on the one hand the PFLP needed to respect the principle of consensus within the PNC as well as to pander the Soviets, on the other, the Popular Front was fully involved in the Lebanese arena in a struggle for survival, therefore the rhetoric of armed resistance still played a major role in Party's narrative.

3 Coalition Politics: The Union of the Left to Counterbalance Arafat's Growing Power

3.1 A Sign of Weakening

The 16th session of the PNC followed the traditional pattern of consensus politics but it was the last time that this principle was put into practice (cf. Gresh 1988, pp. 231-238). In fact, the post war period was marked on the one hand by Arafat's increasing autonomy in decision-making and on the other by the spreading pattern of coalition politics to which opposition parties inside the Palestinian arena started to resort more frequently: from this moment, the different factions that disagreed with Arafat's line tried to coordinate their policies in order to acquire a greater weight within the PLO and counterbalance Fatah's increasing power. That being so, coalition politics can be interpreted as a clear sign of the weakening that leftist opposition was experiencing in that period (Sayigh 1989, pp. 254-255). This conclusion is also reinforced if put in historic perspective. Actually, the period which followed the foundation in 1967, until the 1970 'Black September', represented probably a peak in the power and the capabilities of the Popular Front, a phase during which the PFLP could seriously claim to challenge Arafat's leadership and attempt to take over the PLO. But these were also the years of the painful splits which led to the creation of the PFLP-GC first, and then of the Democratic Front. Despite the negative effects of these fragmentations, the PFLP managed to cope with them and also to have a decisive influence on the rest of the PLO as testified by its major role in dragging the Palestinian armed factions into military confrontation with the Jordanian army despite Arafat's initial tentative to avoid such an outcome (Sayigh 1997, pp. 243-262). Conversely, more than 10 years after these events, the leftist opposition had to form a coa-

lition in the attempt to exert a significant influence on the PLO and the single factions appeared unable to make their own agenda emerge without resorting to this political instrument.

On the eve of the opening of the PNC, in January and early February 1983, the PFLP stressed continuously on the importance of «building front-like internal relations between Palestinian factions, far from any form of monopoly, individualism and authoritarianism» (Al-Hadaf 1983b, pp. 24-25) complaining also about the lack of attention reserved to the issue of national unity until then. Therefore, the strong attachment that PNC resolution expressed towards the unity of the PLO was considered as a result reached thanks toe effort of the Popular Front: PFLP's propaganda focused on «the spirit of national unity» that characterized the National Council, welcoming PLO adherence to the rejection of American peace plans. However, PNC formulation of the tasks for the new stage left space for free interpretations and contacts between Arafat and Hussein continued undisturbed.

3.2 PFLP-DFLP Joint Command: The Need for PLO Reform

The whole opposition inside the PLO knew that the chairman was determined in pursuing his diplomatic strategy, therefore the PFLP and the DFLP started to hold joint meetings since the first months after the PNC in order to organize a prompt reaction to any possible 'deviation' from what they considered as PNC political line. In April 1983, a statement issued by one of these meetings clearly declared their priorities and concerns towards Palestinian politics by affirming that «the two Fronts will firmly stand against any retreat from Palestine National Council Resolutions» (Al-Hadaf 1983f, pp. 12-13).

The PFLP and the DFLP were also concerned by the pressure to which the PLO leadership was subjected especially from Jordan and saw the increasing coordination between them as a useful tool to stop any attack aimed at substituting the PLO in its representative role. A great danger was embodied by «bureaucratic groups» and their «bourgeois aspirations» inside the national movement who were preaching the «American solutions» for the conflict. At this regard the two organizations started to call for sensible change in PLO main institutions:

> The prompt application of democratic reform within the framework of the PLO organs and institutions requires enforcing the democratic forces among the Palestinian revolution's forces. [...] This reform should be implemented within the framework of national unity and with adherence to the principle of internal democratic dialogue that will enhance the role of the Palestinian national revolution and its national decisions. (PFLP-DFLP 1983a, pp. 224-226)

Attachment to Palestinian national program and the urgency of wide-range democratic reforms inside the PLO were the two main slogans waged by the two fronts, especially when the first clashes between Fatah loyalists and rebels started to occur in the Bekaa valley, in Lebanon, in June 1983.

The developments that the Lebanese and the Palestinian arenas lived since the second half of 1983, namely growing tensions inside Fatah and between PLO leadership and Syria as well as the clashes in the Lebanese Al-Jabal area between the National Forces and Phalanges-Lebanese army joint forces, pressured the two factions toward a greater coordination, in order to retain their political weight. As a results, at the end of June 1983 the PFLP and the DFLP announced the formation of a «political and military Joint Command» that would have been «responsible for the political affairs and moves of the two Fronts and for their armed forces, within the framework of strengthening the relations between them and unifying their ranks». The official statement as well as analyses by PFLP's cadres clearly defined the would-be scope of this step: the Joint Command was not to be considered as a simple 'axis', rather it represented the move toward a concrete unification founded on «an objective basis». Moreover, the PFLP and the DFLP intended to make more efforts to unify also their social institutions and trade unions. In such a critical moment, the two Fronts' aim was bolstering PLO institutions and role as well as to contribute to «the success of the decision of the Palestine National Council, including the decision to establish a unified Palestinian national army» (PFLP-DFLP 1983b, pp. 226-227).

But as PFLP press testified, this step received also some critics from those who saw an attempt by the two factions to benefit from the serious break that Fatah was experiencing. At this regard, the PFLP replied not only that such move aimed to build a strong bases for the unity of leftist forces, but that it was also a necessary decision in order to save the PLO from the current impasse and to protect it from a further fragmentation, an event that would only serve those forces aiming at its liquidation.

As Fatah internal crisis continued, the Joint Command decided to issue a «program for unity and democratic reform» of the PLO on October the first 1983: this proposal intended to represent a base for the salvation of the PLO as well as to open a comprehensive dialogue on the major changes to be implemented in the Liberation Organization. First of all, the program defined three main dangers impending on the PLO namely, political liquidation, threats of divisions that became more likely since PLO evacuation from Beirut and the eventual emergence of Fatah internal clashes and finally the risk of «restriction» of the PLO through the imposition of an Arab tutelage on it. These external factors apart, the document focused on PLO internal problems with regards to foreign policy and organizational aspects. Since the beginning of the post-Beirut phase, the PLO was not able to express clear positions towards the main issues that concerned the organization, despite those stands were fully defined by PNC resolutions: this situation

was a consequence of the «preponderance of tactics on strategy» which led to the implementation of «shortsighted maneuvers» that did not follow the scope of long term interests. To be clearer, the program affirmed that this shortsightedness emerged in several PLO improper behaviors: first, the Palestine Liberation Organization disregarded its anti-imperialist nature and consequently seemed to forget the «strategic truth» of the impossibility of coexistence between the Palestinian and Arab peoples and Zionism. The Joint Command referred to the dialogue that chairman Arafat wanted to open with those regional and international parts that called the PLO to recognize Israel. More precisely the document condemned PLO leadership tendency to put all the Arab regimes on the same level which allowed dialogue also with «reactionary regimes»: but the PLO forgot that it was part of the Arab liberation movement and therefore, contacts and collaboration were possible only with nationalist regimes, namely countries members of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front and Syria in particular. Turning the attention on organizational aspects, the Joint Command highlighted the growing «despotism and individualism» in the decision-making process inside the PLO. Without directly mentioning Yasser Arafat, the document denounced the «individualistic tendency» that exacerbated during the last year in every context which was paralleled by a «category-based control» inside PLO organs (Al-Hadaf 1983a, pp. 6-10).

All this was to the detriment of PLO institutions and the practice of collective command that characterized the PLO for the previous two decades and fostered the emergence of a «bureaucratic class» inside PLO institutions accompanied by corruption and cronyism (Al-Hout 2009, p. 50). By pointing out these problems the PFLP and the DFLP were recognizing the arguments that Abu Musa, the Fatah-Uprising’s leader, put forward in order to justify its rebellion against Arafat autocratic behavior (cf. Khalidi 1983, pp. 6-12; Rouleau et al. 1983, pp. 13-16). The whole national movement was aware of the lack of democracy inside the PLO at that moment, but the Joint Command decided not to attack Arafat nor to ask for his removal until his departure from Tripoli and the unprecedented meeting with Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.

The solution to these problems was the implementation of democracy at every level of the organization: the concept of «collective leadership» had to be implemented again in every decisional organs and the control of «deviation» was to be enforced. Furthermore the program of reforms envisaged a stricter control over the effectiveness of the «highest councils in the PLO» and the concession of a real autonomy to PLO unions and other civil institutions: this entailed the enhancement of Occupied Territories institutions in which every faction had to be represented according to its electoral weight. Concerning economic and military aspects, unification was the keyword for the correction of PLO path: a unified Palestinian army had to be created as well as all PLO finances had to be managed in the

cadre of the Palestinian National Fund, which was considered as the only institution that could equally distribute resources among the different factions without much corruption or cronyism.

All these organizational reforms had to be paralleled by PLO alignment with the Arab Liberation Movement and by putting an end to every «ambiguous» contacts with «defeatist» leaders which were threatening the implementation of PNC resolution and were a main cause of Fatah split (Al-Hadaf 1983a, pp. 6-10).

Throughout the entire siege of Arafat's loyalist forces in Tripoli, the PFLP alongside other leftists factions, continued merely to call for the unity of the movement and for dialogue and cohesion with the Syrian regime as well as to offer its good services as mediator. However the break between Arafat and Syria was too deep and the Joint Command was unable to play any active role, further demonstrating the correspondence of coalition politics and political weakening: this tragic episode of PLO history was demonstrating Syria's will to cancel the Palestinian national movement as an independent actor in the Arab-Israeli conflict and put it under its tutelage, disavowing Joint Command intentions to depict it as a fundamental ally (Rouleau 1983, p. 145). On the other hand, Arafat was not to give up the path he started after PLO eviction from Beirut and demonstrated it by visiting Cairo, the 22nd of December 1983, during his evacuation from Tripoli.

3.3 A 'National Front' Against Arafat

The conflict with Syria and the blow he underwent in Tripoli drove PLO chairman to an astonishing visit to Egypt with whom no contacts were held since 'Sadat's betrayal': once again Arafat reaffirmed his will to continue the dialogue with the 'moderate camp' and reject any collaboration with the 'radicals'. In front of Arafat's step the rest of the Palestinian movement, included a sensible part of Fatah, expressed deep outrage. For the PFLP and the Joint Command, previously loyal to Arafat leadership, his resignations became now an «urgent national mission». The decision of accomplishing this trip, represented the most serious evidence that Arafat was determined in continuing his 'individualistic' governance of the PLO. Therefore George Habash, called every PLO organs to move to reestablish democracy inside the national movement. The PFLP carried on an attack merely to the person of the chairman, stating continuously its will to act in respect of PLO rules and PNC resolutions. Similarly, Party's cadres précised that they were not leading an attack to Fatah but they only wanted every deviation to be removed: «the PLO was stronger than Yasser Arafat» (Al-Hadaf 1983i, pp. 4-5).

Also after Arafat's trip to Egypt, the pattern of coalition politics emerged as a top priority for the PFLP: the call for the unity of the left and for its

takeover in the PLO became a mantra repeated at every official occasion. The 25th of December 1983, the Joint Command issued a proclaim together with the Palestinian Communist Party (PCP) and the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) in which these factions invoked the formation of the «largest Palestinian national front in order to end any form of conflict and partisan rivalry» (Al-Hadaf 1984b, pp. 26-27).

This 'Front' had to be convened in the framework of the Central Council of the PLO and at this regard the statement called Fatah Central Committee to further condemn the Arafat's visit to Cairo and to facilitate the organization of the Council: once this convened, all the parts refusing the «defeatist line» would implement the procedures to destitute Arafat. In addition the proclaim demanded Palestinian masses and institutions in the occupied territories to hold a «national conference like the one held Jerusalem in 1978 to condemn and fight Sadat's conspiracy». In sum, the four parties called for Arafat's total isolation both in the Palestinian as well as in the regional arena: the PLO leftist opposition needed the unification of Palestinian ranks to ouster the man that alone was imposing his strategy to the Palestinian National movement.

In the attempt to close the ranks of the left, the PFLP also tried to emphasize the divisions inside Fatah in the hope that this would relinquish Arafat's path choosing the 'steadfast' approach and the alliance with Syria: official statements and declarations by members of Fatah Revolutionary Council or by Fatah Foreign Office were published in which high-rank cadres rejected Arafat's action and affirmed that the chairman planned the trip by his own and thus lost his legitimacy inside the movement (Al-Hadaf 1984c, pp. 22-23).

However these efforts were not successful: at the end of March 1984 the Joint Command the PCP and the PLF, issued another declaration, also known as the 'Aden Statement', that replicated the same call to all «nationalist personalities and forces» for the establishment of a collective leadership (PFLP et al. 1984, pp. 206-207). No progresses were registered, on the contrary, the hopes that Fatah members reactions to Arafat's visit would subvert the leadership inside the PLO, were sensibly smashed after few months. Actually a Fatah political document issued in March, provoked PFLP's critics which considered it a serious regression from the previous Fatah statements since it defined Arafat's moves only as an «organizational violation». This document, that intended to build the base for a dialogue with the Joint Command, did not overtly condemn the visit nor took any clear position toward Arafat's contacts with Egypt and Jordan: in PFLP's views Arafat's policies represented the main reason for PLO split and without a firm denunciation, no dialogue was possible. For the PFLP, Fatah leadership was trying to force a split in the Liberation Organization, pressuring opposite factions to leave the national movement in order to impose its «new defeatist line» to other minor factions (Al-Hadaf 1984d, pp. 22-23).

Although, the Aden Statement entailed no particular advancement in the dialogue between PLO leadership and leftist opposition the PFLP took this meeting in high consideration because it represented an important step in the formation of a united leftist front, the first condition to meet in order to «correct» PLO political course after Arafat's visit to Egypt. In January 1984 the «Democratic Alliance» was set up, the Joint Command established common «points of views» with the Palestine Communist Party and the Palestine Liberation Front: in George Habash's words the development and unity of the «democratic and revolutionary current» was the «security valve for the treatment of the PLO crisis» (Al-Hadaf 1984k, pp. 7-12).

4 Conclusion: The Preparation of the 17th PNC and the Failure of Coalition Politics

4.1 The Fatah-Democratic Alliance Negotiations and the 'Aden Agreement'

Since the beginning of the year, the whole Palestinian national movement was mainly focused on internal politics and on the preparation of the 17th session of the Palestine National Council. The PFLP and other opposition factions were aware of the importance of the next PNC, the one that would seal the imposition or the rejection of the diplomatic strategy which the chairman tried to undertake. In this framework the Democratic Alliance was a tactical tool, and therefore a short-term entente, in order to safeguard the revolution from Arafat's activism, with a view to the establishment of a larger national front «open to everybody without exception, to every part who is ready to fight the deviationist approach and defeatism in the Palestinian arena» (Al-Hadaf 1984k, p. 10).

In this new phase, PLO opposition was on a total defensive stance and its political activity was limited to the reaction to the activities of the leadership: on the one hand Arafat and his supporters were interested in holding the next PNC as quickly as possible, on the other, the Democratic Alliance was seeking to gain time in order to reach some guarantees on the content and the focus of the discussions, before convening the council. For instance, the Joint Command conditioned its participation to the PNC to preliminary meetings that would define the «right political line with no space for interpretations» (Al-Hadaf 1984k, pp. 11-12), as on the contrary was the case for the 16th PNC. Furthermore Abu Ali Mustafa explained in a public intervention at the end of April 1984, that the council could not be convened without the «comprehensive political and organizational agreement» of every PLO faction. Such a consensus was the only condition capable to preserve the integrity of the PLO and prevent the split toward which the leadership was leading the national movement (Al-Hadaf 1984e,

p. 9). This demand also revealed PFLP’s attachment to the traditional PLO consensus-policy as a mean to stop or at least to reduce the weight of Arafat’s initiative on the Palestinian arena: a further signal of the defensive attitude adopted by the Democratic Alliance. In addition, PFLP’s Secretary General explained that in order to «defend the legality» of the PLO, the Party was ready to resort to the boycott of the Executive Committee. If Fatah Central Committee had continued to back «the deviationist line» the Democratic Alliance would prevent «Arafat to speak for the PLO» by refraining its delegates to take part to Executive Committee activities: deprived of six members the committee would be unable to represent the Palestinian people. Actually, the card of quitting the main PLO institutions, had already been played by the PFLP as happened in September 1974, when the Front withdrawn from the Executive Committee to oppose PLO mainstream acceptance of the ‘mini-State’ on the West Bank and Gaza as a goal for the Palestinian national movement. In both cases the PFLP intended such step as a measure to avoid sharing the responsibility of «deviation and surrender» (Cobban 1984, p. 149), but at the same time, in both cases it was a clear sing of powerlessness: in the mid-Seventies only the precipitation of the Lebanese situation stopped Arafat’s path toward negotiations with the enemy and again, despite a larger section of the PLO did not take part in the 17th PNC, as it will be shown, PFLP action apparently did not affect Fatah’s strategy and only external events thwarted his effort of coordination with Jordan.

Despite the unprecedented split that the national movement was facing during this phase, usual preliminary talks between the Democratic Alliance and Fatah started in Aden and Algiers in spring 1984: for two months the delegations of PLO mainstream and of the so-called democratic forces negotiated the conditions for the convening of the Council without reaching any concrete result. The Democratic Alliance was asking the implementation of its plan of reforms as well as demanded a full national consensus which should include also those factions which took up arms against Arafat, now united in the «National Alliance». The Fatah representatives repeatedly declared their will to condition the opening of PNC works to a preliminary national consensus but Arafat for its part, adamantly pursued its strategy of dialogue with Egypt and Jordan and did not restrain from public declarations that angered both the Democratic Alliance and the Syrian-controlled radicals of the National Alliance (Arafat, Malley 1984, pp. 180-183). The PFLP started to overtly call for the «downfall» of PLO chairman as he was now completely committed to its «deviationist line» (Al-Hadaf 1984f, pp. 4-5).

Nevertheless contacts between the contending parts continued and, surprisingly, at the last round of talks held in Aden in May 1984, an agreement was reached (Aden-Algiers agreement). The leftist opposition renounced to its call for Arafat’s immediate ouster but, on the other hand, obtained some formal concessions namely, the opposition to any delegation of representa-

tion to Jordan, the condemnation of Hussein's attempts to undermine the PLO as sole representative, the 'correction' of the relations with Syria and a concrete commitment to the development of an effective collective leadership inside the PLO, to limit Arafat's authoritarianism. At this regard, the Democratic Alliance was satisfied about the new control tasks appointed to the Central Council which now could «call the Executive Committee to account of its implementation of the decisions of the National Council» as well as set the creation by the Council of «permanent, effective committees composed by all member of the National Council» (Fatah, Democratic-Alliance 1984, pp. 200-204; Al-Hadaf 1984a, pp. 8-10).

4.2 The Convocation of the 17th PNC in Amman: The Seal of Arafat's Primacy

Although the new agreement was supposed to start a «comprehensive national dialogue» it soon received many attacks leaving little chance to its implementation. On the one hand, Arafat continued to state his will to go further on the way of dialogue with Jordan and Egypt while, on the other, the National Alliance saw the Aden-Algiers agreement as demagogic and accused the Democratic Alliance for abandoning the commitment to PLO reform and the restoration of the revolutionary line within the Organization.

The Democratic Alliance was stuck between the brand new approach emerged with Arafat's activism, who was trying to bypass the internal opposition through a broader entente with Jordan and Egypt, and a radical small opposition committed to full rebellion and totally in the hands of Syria. Furthermore some contrasts started to appear also inside the Democratic Alliance: divergences emerged especially about the position to adopt vis-à-vis Arafat, after the signing of the agreements. The PFLP labeled reports about disagreement with the DFLP as «rumors» but actually was not allowed to issue a reminder to Fatah Central Committee on measures to be taken against Arafat on behalf of the Democratic Alliance. The Democratic and the Popular Fronts did not share exactly the same view on the matter and although this was a small event, it showed the 'tactical' nature of the alliance between two forces that sometimes had also opposed opinions on important issues (Al-Hadaf 1984h, pp. 6-18).

At the end of summer 1984 the impasse inside the PLO reached its climax, the national dialogue, that the agreements were supposed to start, was paralyzed: every faction was contributing to this paralysis and despite the PFLP and the DFLP continued to claim their adherence to the accords vis-à-vis Arafat's violation and Fatah Central Committee inability to refrain its chairman, they started to demand the deferment of the 17th session of the PNC, although in Aden they agreed on convening it in mid-September. First, the PFLP argued that both holding a PNC with the exclusion of National Alliance forces, as demanded by Fatah and abandoning the legiti-

macy of PLO praxis in order to revolt against the leadership and topple Arafat as the National Alliance was asking, would consecrate the final fragmentation and the end of the PLO as an effective actor in the region. Afterwards, the review of the relations with Syria became a top priority: for the PFLP, 1985 was likely to be a «hot year» in which another military confrontation with Israel in Lebanon could occur. In addition, this dangerous phase demanded to put apart any difference and unify around major issues, namely the opposition to the international defeatist plan. Convening the PNC before reaching a solution concerning relations with Syria would worsen the current crisis (Al-Hadaf 1984g, pp. 4-5).

Clearly this latter and other among PFLP's claims, were mainly a consequence of Syria's pressure on the whole Democratic Alliance. Actually, the Alliance's call for the safeguard of PLO unity during the debate that preceded the PNC was in contradiction with its will to include the National Alliance in the dialogue while, the latter, was first of all committed to Arafat's deposition and to the creation of an alternative Palestinian platform. In October 1984 the implementation of the Aden-Algiers agreements was completely blocked while Arafat and the Syrian clients of the National Alliance were putting the PLO on its way towards the split. Finally, at the beginning of November, the break was made official: the Fatah Central Committee decided to convene the 17th session of the Palestine National Council out of the framework of the Aden-Algiers agreements for the 22nd of the same month, and moreover it decided to hold it in Amman, for the first time since 1970 Black September. By convening the PNC, Arafat sanctioned PLO new course: the one where the principle of majority prevailed on the principle of consensus in the decision-making progress. He exploited the paralysis provoked by the insistence of the Democratic Alliance to make his line pass through legitimate PLO institution (Sayigh 1989, pp. 255-257).

PFLP's Political Bureau held an emergency meeting shortly after the official call of the PNC and issued an independent statement. The Popular Front bitterly condemned this «individualist» step which was about to realize the worst threat to PLO's survival: Arafat was officially sanctioning the split in the national movement in a moment when «imperialist efforts» were «focused on the crystallization of a reactionary axes» and needed the «Palestinian coverage» to succeed. Ironically, Fatah made its step while a delegation of the Democratic Alliance was heading to Tunis in order to hold further talks meant to overcome the crisis. The party finally declared its dissociation and rejection vis-à-vis this decision as well as called all parties and personalities opposed to the deviationist line and its «destructive consequences» to concretely start a comprehensive dialogue and to make all possible efforts to prevent the PNC to take place (Al-Hadaf 1984i, pp. 4-11).

However, PFLP's efforts to thwart the holding of the PNC were vain, and Fatah managed to convene the council though a considerable part of the PLO decided to boycott the session. All the factions of the Democratic

Alliance did not take part to the PNC but the leftist coalition was about to finish, especially the experience of the Joint Command with the DFLP. Actually, the DFLP decided to freeze its participation to the Joint Command as it was disappointed with PFLP’s stubbornness in seeking a dialogue with PLO’s rebels and held its former ally responsible for the failure of the talks with Fatah Central Committee (Al-Hadaf 1984j, pp. 4-6).

Once the 17th PNC concluded, the Popular Front was defeated on every front: its incapability to endorse a defined stand and to resist multiple sources of pressure drove the Party to a de-facto inaction from which it emerged sharply weakened. The project of union of all leftist forces failed because the Front was unable to definitively dismiss the National Alliance and formulate a better coordination with the Democratic Front, which leaned closer to Fatah. The lack of ability, or will, to distance itself from Syria’s agenda for the PLO discredited the Front inside the Palestinian national movement and left more space to Arafat’s strategy. The PLO chairman for its part, benefitted from this situation and pursued with strength the way of coordination with Jordan and Egypt, without seeking a settlement with the internal opposition. In the following years, despite the fall of the Hussein-Arafat agreement and the disruption of the first Intifada, the PFLP was unable to recover the advantage and the power acquired by Yasser Arafat between 1982 and 1984. The Front managed to play an active role during the unprecedented uprising exploded in the Occupied Territories in December 1987 but the keys of PLO decision-making were completely in the hands of Fatah’s leader which could not be restrained by any means through PLO institutions. The marginalization of Habash’s party appeared definitive as also the Islamist current emerged with strength, during the Nineties in particular, the Palestinian political arena was polarized between Fatah, and the newly created Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) leaving no room for the traditional secular leftist opposition.

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La terminologia botanica sicula e andalusa nel *Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ li ṣifāt aštāt al-nabāt wa-ḍurūb anwāʿ al-mufradāt* di Idrīsī

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Abstract *The Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ li ṣifāt aštāt al-nabāt wa-ḍurūb anwāʿ al-mufradāt* (Compendium of the properties of diverse plants and various kinds of simple drugs) by Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Idrīs al-ʿAlī bi-Amr Allāh, best known as al-Idrīsī (d. between 1165 and 1176), is a botanical work in which he lists in alphabetical order the names of plants and simple drugs by giving their translations in several languages such as Hebrew, Syriac, Latin, Greek, Romance, *hindī*, *turkī*, *nabaṭī* and above all Sicilian Arabic and Andalusi Arabic. The analysis of the Sicilian Arabic terms in the *Kitāb* might be fruitful for the reconstruction of Sicilian Arabic features that are yet to be defined. Moreover, the Andalusi Arabic vocabulary contained in the *Kitāb* might help to shed new light on the characteristics of Spanish Arabic and Maghribi Medieval dialects lexicon.

1 L'opera e la sua rilevanza dal punto di vista linguistico

Il *Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ li ṣifāt aštāt al-nabāt wa-ḍurūb anwāʿ al-mufradāt* (Il compendio delle diverse piante e dei vari tipi di semplici) di Idrīsī (m. tra il 1165 e il 1176: sulla data di morte di Idrīsī si vedano gli studi di De Simone 1966, 1995, 1999) è un'opera appartenente all'ambito della botanica. Idrīsī, infatti, vi elenca in ordine alfabetico i nomi delle piante e delle droghe semplici allora conosciute, seguiti dalla relativa traduzione in diverse lingue quali ebraico, siriaco, latino, spagnolo, arabo di Sicilia, arabo andaluso, *ifrānǧī*, greco, *hindī*, *fārsī*, *kurdī*, turco e berbero. In questo trattato, il geografo descrive in maniera approfondita i semplici e le loro proprietà, mostrando una profonda competenza in materia di botanica.

Questo articolo costituisce l'elaborazione di una parte della mia tesi di dottorato in Lingue, culture e società conseguito presso l'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia. Vorrei cogliere l'occasione di ringraziare la professoressa Antonella Ghersetti, che è stata mio Tutore, per i preziosi consigli che mi ha fornito in merito alla stesura del presente contributo.

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Alla luce delle ipotesi sulle origini siciliane di Idrīsī, avanzate per la prima volta da Giovanni Oman (1961, 1962, 1966b, 1969, 1970) e sostenute più recentemente da Allaoua Amara e Anneliese Nef (Amara, Nef 2000; Nef 2010) sulla base di un passo del *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-l-Wafayāt* nel quale al-Ṣafadī afferma che Idrīsī sarebbe nato in Sicilia e cresciuto alla corte di re Ruggero (Amara, Nef 2000, p. 122), l'analisi dei termini arabo-siculi presenti nel *Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ*, ad oggi mai effettuata, acquisisce un rinnovato interesse. Essa potrebbe, infatti, rivelare nuovi dati utili per la descrizione delle caratteristiche dell'arabo di Sicilia che sono ancora in parte da ricostruire (si vedano sull'argomento Cassarino 2007, 2012; Grand'Henry 2007; Lentin 2007, 2007b; La Rosa 2010, 2012). Il *corpus* arabo-siculo, infatti, non è altrettanto esteso come ad esempio quello andaluso, ma è costituito da testimonianze, talvolta frammentarie, di cui un'attenta disamina deve ancora essere realizzata.

Trattandosi di un'opera di carattere non letterario, e come tale meno sensibile alle costrizioni di carattere linguistico e stilistico della letteratura 'alta', il *Kitāb* rappresenta un livello di lingua 'medio' di grande rilevanza per lo studio dell'arabo di Sicilia. Nel *Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ* sono inoltre attestati elementi di arabo andaluso. Questi tratti linguistici rendono il testo particolarmente interessante non soltanto ai fini della ricostruzione delle caratteristiche dell'arabo di Sicilia, ma anche perché, in un quadro più ampio, l'analisi linguistica dell'opera è importante per l'acquisizione di nuovi dati sull'arabo andaluso e sul lessico magrebino medievale.

In questo contributo, vorrei presentare i primi risultati di una disamina linguistica relativa sia all'aspetto semantico che a quello morfofonologico il cui obiettivo è duplice: il primo è quello di verificare se esistesse un lessico botanico peculiare dell'arabo di Sicilia, ben distinto da quello andaluso; il secondo è quello di tentare di chiarire il significato di alcuni termini definiti da Idrīsī *andalusiyya*, *išbāniyya* o *ṣiqilliyya*.

2 Il manoscritto Fātiḥ 2610: problematiche e peculiarità linguistiche

Il *Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ* è stato considerato perduto per lungo tempo, fino a che Helmut Ritter, all'inizio degli anni venti, ha rinvenuto uno dei due manoscritti giunti sino a noi. Esso è custodito alla Biblioteca Fātiḥ di Istanbul sotto la segnatura 2610 (Meyerhof 1929, pp. 45-53; 1935, pp. 22-25). Il secondo testimone, scoperto più recentemente da Fuat Sezgin, si trova invece alla Biblioteca Majlis-i Sanā di Teheran sotto la segnatura 18120. Esso fu copiato a Marāġa nel 1283 e non è mai stato analizzato. Esso sarebbe più completo di quello di Istanbul rispetto alle fonti, e costituirebbe una redazione diversa. Mancano, tuttavia, nel codice iraniano, le traduzioni dei termini nelle altre varietà. Per questo motivo ho scelto di concentrare la mia attenzione sul manoscritto di Istanbul.

Ernst Meyer, nel 1856 (pp. 285-301), ha pubblicato uno studio nel quale metteva a confronto il materiale botanico dell'*Opus Geographicum* con quello dell'opera di Ibn Bayṭār, (botanico andaluso m. nel 1248), che nel *Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ li-mufradāt al-adwiya wa'l-aġḏiya* ha citato più volte il trattato di botanica di Idrīsī; Meyer ha sottolineato come il geografo fosse altresì un eccellente conoscitore dei semplici, delle loro origini, proprietà e usi. Lucien Leclerc, nel 1876, ha attirato nuovamente l'attenzione sull'opera affermando che lo *Šarīf* vi avrebbe riportato informazioni e conoscenze botaniche uniche e originali (Leclerc 1876, pp. 65-66). I primi studi sul *Kitāb* restarono, tuttavia, parziali fino al ritrovamento dei due manoscritti dell'opera. D'altra parte, la fama di geografo, della quale Idrīsī gode grazie alla stesura del *Kitāb nuzhat al-muštāq fī iḫtirāq al-āfāq*, ossia «Il sollazzo di chi si diletta di girare il mondo», pare avere messo in secondo piano l'importanza dello stesso *Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ*.

Negli anni Trenta del Novecento, Max Meyerhof ha realizzato alcuni studi sul testimone conservato a Istanbul. Tra le preziose informazioni che egli ha fornito, ha particolare rilevanza il fatto che il manoscritto di Istanbul sarebbe stato copiato direttamente dall'originale di Idrīsī e che sia caratterizzato da numerosi errori attribuibili allo scriba (si vedano Meyerhof 1929, pp. 45-53; 1929b, pp. 388-390; 1930, pp. 225-236; Sezgin 1995, p. VIII).

Il manoscritto Fātiḥ 2610 misura 35 × 25 cm, la scrittura occupa 25 righe per pagina ed è in un *nasḫ* chiaro, ma quasi mai vocalizzato, spesso privo di punti diacritici e, talvolta, mancante di alcune consonanti. Il testo è mutilo e non datato; l'ipotesi di Ritter è che esso sia stato copiato nel XIII secolo (Meyerhof 1941, p. 91). Il nome di Ibn al-Muʾammil e la data 1401, apposti presumibilmente dai proprietari del manoscritto, sono visibili sul *colophon*: si tratta, probabilmente, di un discendente di una famiglia araba stabilitasi a Siviglia e a Granada. È altresì visibile il timbro dei *Waqf* della famiglia turca che regnò dal 1730 al 1754. Il manoscritto comprende 148 fogli nei quali è contenuta la descrizione dei semplici ordinati secondo le prime 14 lettere dell'alfabeto arabo. Pare, dunque, che soltanto metà dell'opera ci sia pervenuta: si tratta, infatti, dei primi due volumi rispetto ai quattro previsti da Idrīsī (Meyerhof 1941, pp. 89-101). Il primo volume include le lettere dall'*alif* alla *zāy* e contiene 360 lemmi, il secondo quelle dalla *ḥā'* alla *nūn* e include 250 termini (ʿĪssā 1944, p. 83).

Il *Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ* si apre con una lunga introduzione nella quale Idrīsī critica aspramente l'ignoranza dei medici contemporanei che non conoscono le opere di medicina classica ed esalta, al contempo, gli scritti di Dioscoride (I sec. d.C.) che egli considera fondamentali per il suo lavoro. Infine, Idrīsī fa riferimento a Galeno (m. 199 d.C.), ad alcuni rimedi naturali greci introdotti e resi noti dagli Arabi attraverso le opere di farmacologia e fornisce altresì nozioni di botanica. Dopo questa introduzione, segue la lista dei semplici presentati in ordine alfabetico, descritti e affiancati dalla relativa traduzione in altre lingue.

La descrizione dei semplici è molto accurata: Idrīsī si sofferma sulle loro qualità, sull'aspetto, sull'origine, sull'uso medico e sul grado (Meyerhof 1941, pp. 92-96), li classifica secondo la specie della quale fanno parte, ne descrive tutte le proprietà curative e le sostanze che si possono estrarre dalle radici, dalla buccia e dai semi come, ad esempio, resine e oli (ʿĪssā 1944, p. 83). Idrīsī fornisce, altresì, informazioni riguardo agli usi cosmetici o tessili, alle sostanze nocive per l'uomo, alla dolcezza/amarezza, morbidezza/durezza di tronco, foglie, radici e semi, al colore, alla lunghezza, al sapore, alla viscosità, e mette a paragone le piante descritte con altre più conosciute. La descrizione della pianta è accompagnata dalla sua collocazione geografica e dal tipo di suolo nel quale alligna e, a volte, dalle modalità di coltivazione. Idrīsī riporta spesso le opinioni di medici e botanici precedenti, in particolar modo quelle di Dioscoride e Galeno, citati rispettivamente con le sigle د e ج; alla fine di ogni capitolo include poi ulteriori nomi di piante poco note, le descrive brevemente e affianca a ciascuna di esse il nome con cui è meglio conosciuta. Nella seconda parte del testo, invece, troviamo alcuni interventi di Abū Yūsuf al-Ṣiqillī, probabilmente un discendente o un allievo di Idrīsī, che ha inserito porzioni di testo appartenenti alle proprie opere (Meyerhof 1941, p. 92).

L'edizione critica del *Kitāb* non è mai stata realizzata sino a oggi; Sezgin, Amawī e Neubauer hanno, tuttavia, il merito di avere reso possibile la fruizione dell'opera attraverso la riproduzione fotostatica dei due manoscritti (d'ora in avanti Sezgin et al. 1995). Va comunque segnalato che un'équipe di studiosi diretta da Federico Corriente è attualmente impegnata nella realizzazione dell'edizione critica del *Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ*.

L'approccio all'opera pone problemi a vari livelli: ai problemi di lettura, dovuti allo stato di conservazione del manoscritto che, oltre a essere incompleto, contiene parti abrase, interpolazioni e aggiunte di diverse mani, si aggiungono quelli relativi alla terminologia usata da Idrīsī a proposito di alcune varietà linguistiche citate nel *Kitāb*. Federico Corriente (2012, pp. 57-63) ha recentemente pubblicato un breve articolo nel quale ha tentato di chiarire l'origine linguistica di alcuni termini. Il latino nel *Kitāb* può corrispondere al latino classico, a quello volgare oppure a una lingua romanza come lo spagnolo, il francese o l'italiano (Corriente 2012, pp. 58-59). L'*ifranǧī* è la lingua dei Franchi, ossia di tutti quei Cristiani non sottomessi ai Musulmani, ed equivale alla lingua dei Normanni, una varietà di francese, o a un dialetto sud italico (Corriente 2012, p. 59); alcuni termini definiti *ifranǧī*, tuttavia, sono di fatto catalani (Corriente 2012, pp. 61-62). Quanto al berbero, i nomi che l'autore fornisce sono di uso comune, sebbene non tutti presenti negli altri trattati di botanica (Corriente 2012, p. 59). *Andalusiyya* e *išbāniyya* sono i termini utilizzati in maniera indistinta per definire l'arabo andaluso. Secondo Corriente (p. 60 nota 10), l'appellativo *išbāniyyūn* usato da Idrīsī per definire gli andalusi ma verosimilmente mai

usato dagli arabi di Spagna per indicare i loro connazionali, sarebbe stato preso in prestito dagli arabi di Sicilia:

> On constate dans les dictionnaires syriaques (cf. Smith 2007) que le nom latin ou latinisé Hispania était devenu en Orient, du moins chez ceux qui parlaient l'araméen, synonyme de l'Italie, ce qui fît que les Arabes installés en Egypte et en train d'envahir les pays plus occidentaux durent adopter comme désignation nouvelle de la Péninsule Ibérique l'expression copte pour nommer le Sud-Ouest, **amend e ris*, et puis, en corrigeant ce qui avait l'air d'une forme yéménite de l'article arabe, on dit Al-Andilis ou Al-Andalus (voir Corriente 2008b). Les auteurs andalous n'ont jamais employé le vieux nom latin de leur pays, bien qu'ils ne l'ignoraient pas, mais on comprend aisément qu'en Italie on ait continué de l'utiliser, même chez les Musulmans de Sicile, auxquels Al-Idrīsī l'aurait emprunté.

Idrīsī usa, generalmente, il termine *ʿağamiyya* per indicare il volgare romanzo usato in al-Andalus. Alle volte, tuttavia, *andalusiyya*, che si riferisce generalmente all'arabo andaluso, indica altresì il romanzo di al-Andalus, sicché nel *Kitāb* non vi è sempre una chiara distinzione terminologica tra le varietà di lingua in uso nella regione.

A proposito dei termini tradotti in lingue quali l'*hindī*, il *kurdī* e il turco, è poco probabile che siano stati introdotti da Idrīsī (Corriente 2012, pp. 57-58). Se è verosimile, infatti, che il geografo possa avere acquisito l'ebraico e il greco in Sicilia, dove le due lingue erano compresenti, è poco plausibile, invece, che egli abbia appreso lingue come l'*hindī*, il *kurdī* e il turco, che erano troppo distanti dall'area in cui operava. Nel prologo, infatti, Idrīsī stesso dichiara di volere fornire le traduzioni dei nomi dei semplici in siriaco, greco, persiano, latino e berbero, ma non fa riferimento a lingue quali l'*hindī*, il *kurdī* e il turco. I termini in queste lingue, peraltro, erano difficilmente reperibili nelle altre opere di botanica andaluse. Si tratterebbe, dunque, di interpolazioni e di aggiunte di altra mano (Corriente 2012, p. 58). Anche le definizioni di queste lingue, d'altra parte, sono talvolta imprecise: il turco e il *kurdī* si rivelano essere forme contemporanee delle stesse varietà, il copto è spesso greco, il *nabaṭī* è siriaco o greco, il *rūmī* e l'*iġrīqī* possono essere varietà di greco o di neogreco, mentre l'*hindī* può corrispondere a qualche lingua dravidica del Sud dell'India oppure al sanscrito (Corriente 2012, p. 58 nota 5).

3 Il lessico botanico siculo-andaluso: nuove prospettive di ricerca

Saranno presentati, qui di seguito, i ventisei lemmi attribuiti da Idrīsī all'arabo di Sicilia e/o all'arabo andaluso che ho confrontato con i termini utilizzati in altre fonti magrebino-andaluse coeve per indicare gli stessi semplici. I seguenti sono le fonti e gli studi sui quali si basa il confronto; la lista include trattati e dizionari botanici di ambito magrebino-andaluso e tre studi sull'opera del botanico andaluso al-Ġāfiqī (m. 1165), indicati in ordine cronologico.

Abū Naṣr al-ʿAṭṭār al-Isrāʾīlī, *Kitāb Minhaǧ al-dukkān wa dustūr al-aʿyān fī aʿmāl wa tarkīb al-adawiyya al-nāfiʿa li l-abdān* (Zaġla 1997). Nonostante quest'opera sia stata composta nel X secolo, è stata scelta in quanto costituisce una delle fonti utilizzate da Idrīsī e contiene un'esaustiva lista di semplici e delle loro proprietà. Le opere di al-Isrāʾīlī (m. 952), celebre medico, fisico e filosofo ebreo, probabilmente nato in Egitto ed emigrato a Qayrawān, ebbero una vasta ricezione in Europa, dove circolavano in varie traduzioni in lingue occidentali.

M.A. Palacios, *Glosario de voces romances registradas por un botánico anónimo hispano-musulmán (siglos XI-XII)*. Si tratta di un dizionario basato su un'opera di medicina erroneamente attribuita al medico cristiano Ibn Buṭlān (m. 1066) di Baġdād, ma, in realtà, realizzato da un anonimo farmacologo e botanico ispano-musulmano vissuto tra l'XI e il XII secolo. L'origine andalusa dell'autore sarebbe stata ipotizzata anche a partire dall'espressione che egli utilizza ripetutamente nell'opera: *ʿindanā bi-l-Andalus* (p. XI), ossia «da noi in al-Andalus». L'autore del dizionario fu allievo di Ibn Baṣṣāl e collega di Ibn al-Luengo, entrambi di Toledo. Il primo dei due, vissuto nell'XI secolo, agronomo e botanico di corte del sovrano al-Maʾmūn che regnò a Toledo tra il 1073 e il 1075, si recò in Sicilia. Quanto a Ibn al-Luengo (Sarton 1956, p. 74), nome per metà arabo e metà castigliano come accadeva di frequente nell'XI secolo, è l'epiteto che indica in realtà ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Anṣārī al-Sāʿīdī Abū-l-Ḥasan (m. 1095) (Sezgin 1998, pp. IX-XV; si vedano anche Gracia Mechbal 2013, pp. 47-69; Alvarez Lopez 1946, pp. 5-175).

Maimonide, *Šarḥ asmāʾ al-ʿuqqār, l'explication des noms de drogues: un glossaire de matière médicale composé par Maïmonide* (Meyerhof 1996). L'opera di Maymūn Ibn Mūsā, medico, teologo e filosofo ebreo vissuto nel XII secolo in al-Andalus, ha avuto come modello il *Kitāb al-ǧāmiʿ*. Lo *Šarḥ asmāʾ al-ʿuqqār* si credette perduto finché Ritter ne trovò una copia nella Biblioteca di Aya Sofya a Istanbul nel 1932 e lo segnalò a Meyerhof, che ne realizzò la prima edizione. Il manoscritto contiene quattrocentocinque paragrafi, nei quali i nomi delle droghe semplici sono indicati nelle varietà dialettali in uso in Magreb e in Egitto, con particolare riguardo all'andaluso, e in varie lingue quali il greco, il siriaco, il berbero e il persiano. Si noti che, nonostante l'autore fosse ebreo, non sono presenti termini in ebraico

nel testo; ciò probabilmente è dovuto al fatto che il glossario era destinato agli allievi non ebrei di Maymūn (Meyerhof 1996, pp. XLIV-XLIVII).

The Abridged version of «the Book of Simple drugs» of Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Ghafiqi, by Gregorius Abu’l-Faraj (Barhebraeus) (Sezgin 1996c).

M. Meyerhof, *Études de pharmacologie arabe tirées de manuscrits inédits (avec trois planches), Deux Manuscrits Illustrés du Livre des Simples d’Aḥmad al-Ġāfiqī* (Meyerhof 1941).

M. Steinschneider, *Gafiki’s Verzeichniss einfacher Heilmittel* (Sezgin 1996b).

Traité des Simples par Ibn el-Beïthar (m. 646/1248) (Sezgin 1996). Questo testo è stato scelto in quanto Ibn al-Bayṭār, esperto di botanica andaluso, ha citato e adoperato il *Kitāb* al-*ǧāmi‘* per la redazione del suo trattato.

M. Meyerhof, *Essai sur les noms portugais de drogues dérivés de l’arabe* (Sezgin 1997).

3.1 I lemmi

انفحة in al-Andalus *al-t.n.q* بالاندلسية التنق (83)[1] secondo Idrīsī significa «ventricolo d’agnello, caglio». Esso cura la dissenteria cronica, favorisce sonni sereni, l’evacuazione dell’intestino, la cura delle fratture e facilita il concepimento oppure, se ingerito in altre condizioni, può impedirlo (Sezgin et al. 1995, pp. 38, 68-69). Il termine in arabo andaluso nelle altre fonti prese in esame è الينق: probabilmente la *tā’* a inizio di parola nel *Kitāb* non indica una variante del vocabolo, ma è un errore di copiatura.

Nel trattato di Ibn Bayṭār troviamo la forma اِنفحة «caglio»; nello stesso testo, il botanico riporta le affermazioni di Galeno e Dioscoride. Galeno fa riferimento, in particolare, a quello di lepre, utile per epilessia, sanguinamento mestruale, coagulazione del sangue nello stomaco. Dioscoride lo reputa utile per dolori addominali, ulcere intestinali, sanguinamento uterino cronico, emottisi. Il caglio favorisce il concepimento ed è utile altresì per la cura dell’epilessia se assunto con aceto. È un buon rimedio contro i veleni e il siero di vipera. Per Ibn Bayṭār, il caglio di tutti gli animali ha proprietà simili, ma bisogna astenersi dall’assumerlo (Sezgin 1996, vol. 1, pp. 156-159). Al-Isrā’īlī sostiene che il caglio di animali quali l’asina, la gazzella e la capra, assunto con aceto, combatte l’idropisia. L’autore distingue, inoltre, le proprietà del caglio dei vari animali. Secondo Avicenna (m. 1037), il celeberrimo medico, filosofo e matematico persiano Ibn Sīnā, il caglio è un elemento secco e caldo al terzo grado, ha proprietà

1 Il numero indicato tra parentesi è quello che Idrīsī attribuisce al lemma nel *Kitāb al-ǧāmi‘*. Si noti, inoltre, che i termini arabo-siculi e arabo-andalusi analizzati in questo contributo non saranno traslitterati poiché non sono quasi mai vocalizzati nel manoscritto. Si è scelto, invece, di riportare la traslitterazione dei lemmi e le varianti di lettura suggerite nelle fonti e negli studi scelti per il confronto linguistico dei termini.

antitoniche ed è inebriante (Zaġla 1997, p. 158). Al-Ġāfiqī indica il caglio degli animali in allattamento con gli stessi sostantivi (Sezgin 1996c, pp. 228-230). Maimonide fornisce, invece, il nome in arabo ‘standard’ العقد (d’ora in avanti solo «arabo») (Corriente 1997, p. 359) e il nome andaluso o berbero ألينو (Sezgin 1996c, p. 242; Meyerhof 1941b, pp. 13-29). Leggiamo, inoltre:

> C’est *al-ʿaqid* («la caillette») et son nom dans le peuple du Maghrib est *al-yanaq*. [...] Le nom *yanaq* se rencontre aussi chez Ibn Bayṭar (IB 2322) qui le désigne comme un terme andalou. Il est cependant difficile d’en trouver l’origine, le nom espagnol moderne étant *cuajo* (Meyerhof 1996, p. 18).

بهمن o بهمى: ويسمى بصقلية الدوثر (93). Secondo Idrīsī, è una pianta di piccole dimensioni, con un solo ramo e foglie che somigliano a quelle della malva che poi, una volta cresciute, somigliano a quelle del pero, sebbene siano più larghe (*Centaurea behen* o *Cucubalus behen*, si veda Corriente 1997, p. 69). Le foglie sono gialle e le radici simili a piccole carote. L’assunzione del بهمن con il miele stimola l’appetito ed è eccitante (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 47). Per Maimonide, di questa pianta si utilizza soltanto la radice, e infatti il nome *bahman* indica quest’ultima. Il nome in spagnolo è يربه شانه; ve ne sono due varietà delle quali quella rossa non cresce nel Magreb, ma in Iraq. Il nome بهمن è persiano e indica il nome del mese di gennaio durante il quale questa radice è raccolta e consumata. La varietà bianca è la *Centaurea behen*, mentre non è chiara la natura della varietà rossa: probabilmente si tratta della *Plombaginaceae Statice Limonium L.* Il nome يربة شانة designa, in realtà, una sorta di menta (Meyerhof 1996, p. 27). Ibn Bayṭār dice che Isḥāq Ibn ʿImrān (medico di Baġdād m. IX sec. vissuto in Nord Africa) distingue due varietà di بهمن: uno rosso e uno bianco, entrambi con le radici come piccole carote. Ha sapore dolce e viscoso e leggermente aromatico; proviene dall’Armenia e dal Ḫurāsān. Ibn Bayṭār aggiunge che, secondo Avicenna, esso si presenta in frammenti legnosi come radici essiccate. Il بهمن è caldo e secco al secondo grado, riscalda e fortifica il cuore, è adatto per le palpitazioni e stimola la secrezione dello sperma. Entrambi i tipi di بهمن sono astringenti, stabilizzanti ed eccitanti. Al-Rāzī (m. 925) sostiene che la varietà rossa sia afrodisiaca (Sezgin 1996, vol. 1, pp. 280-281). Secondo Sezgin:

> La synonymie des behemen soulève de grandes difficultés. Disons d’abord que Saumaise s’est trompé [De *Homonymis hyles iatricae*, p. 209 (NdA)] quand il a voulu voir dans ce mot un duel dont le radical serait *behem* بهم. Nous trouvons dans Massīh et dans le cheikh Dawoud ce mot au duel, sous la forme behmenân بهمنان. Le mot behemen est donc un singulier. Il est dans les textes un terme de comparaison qui se lit diversement, chez les uns جزوة «carotte», et chez les autres جوزة «noix».

> Nous avons adopté la première leçon, mais dubitativement. On fait du *behemen* blanc, vulgairement *behen*, le *Centaurea behen*, et de l’espèce rouge le *Statice limonium*. D’autre part, on lit dans Ainslie, comme synonyme de *beheman*, *Physalis flexuosa*». (Sezgin 1996, vol. 1, p. 281)

Ibn Bayṭār distingue il بهمى *Bohma*, *Lolium* come una voce e una varietà diverse. Dioscoride, (IV, 43), la descrive come una pianta dalle foglie simili a quelle dell’orzo, ma più corte e strette. La sua spiga somiglia a quella del *Lilium*. Assunta con vino ristretto arresta le emorragie e le emissioni sovrabbondanti di urina (Sezgin 1996, vol. 1, pp. 281-282). Nel *Glosario de voces romances registradas por un botánico anónimo hispano-musulmán* a cura di Palacios, بهمى significa «grano»; Dioscoride lo chiama *fórmocos* e *fórmocoš*, probabilmente dal nome della formica che trasporta il grano. In al-Andalus, è noto anche come سنبل الشيطان «spiga del diavolo». Secondo Palacios, non è possibile identificarlo con il بهمى. Quello bianco, in particolare, sarebbe da identificarsi con la *Centaurea behen* L. sinonimo di يربه شانه, una pianta che cura i dolori dell’utero (Sezgin 1998, pp. 126, 173-174, 357-358).

Nell’opera di al-Isrāʾīlī si dice:

> (بهمن ابيض) بدله أحمر (بهمن أحمر) بدله وزنه درونج وقيل بدله وزنه زونباد «*Behemen* bianco, al suo posto si può usare quello rosso; *behemen* rosso, al suo posto per lo stesso peso è possibile usare il *doronicum* e si dice che il suo equivalente, per lo stesso peso, sia la zedoaria». (Zaġla 1997, p. 117 e si veda anche Chipman 2009)

Al-Ġāfiqī riporta le indicazioni di Idrīsī, il quale dice che il بهمن bianco ha la lunghezza di una o due spanne e piccole foglie simili alla malva comune che più tardi diventano più lunghe e dentate come quelle del prugno. La radice è nero-rossastra all’esterno e bianca all’interno (Sezgin 1996c, p. 298). Secondo al-Ġāfiqī, in Spagna era chiamato برشانة e مطرشانة (pp. 295-296). Il دوثر è il *Lilium (lilium) multiflorum* utilizzato per combattere la diarrea ed è diverso dal *behemen* (pp. 357-358). Secondo Corriente, دوثر non sarebbe un termine arabo specifico della Sicilia (Corriente 2012, p. 61).

بنج in arabo سيكران, ينبت بصقلية ويسمى الحمرا (126). Secondo Idrīsī, si tratta del giusquiamo di due varietà, nero e bianco, della famiglia delle Solanacee. Il بنج cresce in Sicilia e in arabo è noto come سيكران الصغير; è indicato per il bruciore degli occhi, per i dolori dello stomaco, dei denti e per i gonfiori. Placa le emorragie dall’utero e di tutte le viscere. È utile per il congelamento, l’amputazione da tumore, il gonfiore delle mammelle durante il parto, i dolori alle gambe e le ustioni; è una pianta che fa ingrassare ed è, altresì, in grado di favorire la guarigione delle verruche. È una sostanza inebriante la cui massima efficacia risiede nella capacità di calmare i dolori (Sezgin et al. 1995, pp. 59-60, 93-94). Maimonide ne indica due specie: una dai

semi bianchi e l’altra dai semi neri. I semi bianchi e piccoli corrispondono al بنج, quelli neri ad الشوكران o سيكران, in spagnolo *barbaška* «verbasco»; questa varietà è chiamata anche *balmānda* «milmindro». الشوكران è detto anche مكنسة الانذر «la scopa del granaio» oppure الشوكة اليهوديّة «la spina dei giudei» o الشوكة السوداء «la spina nera». Secondo Meyerhof, Maimonide ha confuso varie specie di piante in questo capitolo: بنج è un nome indiano che indica la canapa indiana ossia la *Cannabis sativa var* che è stata utilizzata in seguito per indicare il giusquiamo. سيكران viene dalla radice semitica *s.k.r.* che indica ogni sorta di droghe inebrianti. *Barbaška* «verbasco» e مكنسة الانذر indicano il *verbascum* e الشوكة اليهوديّة «la spina dei giudei» o الشوكة السودا «la spina nera» indicano l’*Eryngium campestre L* (Meyerhof 1996, p. 32). Per Ibn Bayṭār si tratta del giusquiamo, in arabo سيكران. L’autore cita Dioscoride, secondo il quale si tratta del giusquiamo اوسقوامَس, una pianta da frutto. Ve ne sono tre specie, due delle quali sono nocive, mentre una è medicinale e curativa. Ibn Bayṭār cita ancora Galeno e Avicenna, secondo i quali la *cannabis* serve a ingrassare, ha potere coagulante, guarisce la carie ed è efficace contro le emorragie. Calma la tosse e i dolori ai denti. Secondo Ibn ʿImrān, citato da Ibn Bayṭār, con vino dolce o miele ha proprietà soporifere ed è un rimedio contro il catarro e il mal di denti. Il botanico riporta ancora le parole di al-Rāzī secondo il quale Archigene riferisce che questa pianta guarirebbe dalle coliche e che la sua assunzione può portare stato di ebbrezza e vomito, quelle di ʿIsā Ibn ʿAlī che indica la varietà nera come mortale, e quelle di Ibn al-Ǧazzār (medico di al-Qayrawān m. 1000) che parla anch’esso delle proprietà letali di una delle varietà della pianta (Sezgin 1996, vol. 1, pp. 271-273). Al-Isrāʾīlī riporta soltanto la seguente frase: (بنج) أبيض بدله بنج أحمر «*benǧ* bianco: al suo posto si può usare il *benǧ* rosso» (Zaǧla 1997, pp. 117, 134). Al-Ġāfiqī dice soltanto che questa pianta, in Spagna, è nota come السيكران anche se quest’ultima indica una pianta diversa (si veda Meyerhof 1997, p. 5). Secondo Corriente, (1997, p. 66) si tratta di un nome botanico in uso nell’arabo andaluso che indica il *Hyoscyamus niger* e la *Cannabis sativa*.

بقشرم: ينبت بصقلية يسمى برقثرم in Sicilia è برقثرم oppure تثرم (135): secondo Idrīsī, è una pianta autunnale utile per la cura dei dolori, l’erisipela. Cresce a Qaṣr Yānah (l’attuale Enna) (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 64). Non avendo reperito il termine altrove, è difficile dire con esattezza di che pianta si tratti.

بقم: واهل الاندلس يسمونه حسن يوم (144). Idrīsī lo descrive come un albero indiano simile al mandorlo, ma più piccolo i cui frutti sono chiamati bagaroli selvatici di colore rosso canadese. È utile per i gonfiori ed è impiegato come colorante per gli abiti e come cosmetico, motivo per il quale gli andalusi lo chiamano حسن اليوم (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 66). Ibn Bayṭār lo chiama بكم «noce metella» e aggiunge che la sua pronuncia è *bokkom* da non confondere con il *bakkam* (Sezgin 1996, vol. 1, p. 246). Steinschneider

lo identifica con la *Brasilium bacca* (*balathan*) (si vedano Sezgin 1996b, p. 513 e Corriente 1997, p. 59: *baqamun*, *bácam*, *Caesalpinia echinata*, pernambuco).

جراسية variante araba ففار (?), e andalusa حب الملوك: ويسمى عندنا بالاندلس حب الملوك (199). La ciliegia, secondo il geografo, fa bene allo stomaco e regola il temperamento. Bisogna mangiarne con moderazione poiché le ciliegie potrebbero avere un effetto costipante e causare addirittura l'aborto. Tra le proprietà di questo frutto vi è quella di sciogliere i calcoli renali. Se impiegato come collirio, favorisce il recupero della vista. Idrīsī afferma che secondo alcuni il حب الملوك non è la ciliegia (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 91 e si veda anche Meyerhof 1997, p. 2). Secondo Maimonide, la ciliegia è chiamata anche شاه دَوران (*šāh dawrān*), nome persiano non registrato sui dizionari che abbiamo consultato. *Ğarāsiyā*, secondo Ibn Bayṭār, è la pronuncia siciliana, mentre *šarāsiyā* sarebbe quella spagnola (Meyerhof 1996, p. 186). Per il botanico andaluso, la ciliegia in Sicilia è detta *qirāsiyā Baʿlbek* قراسيا بعلبكي (Sezgin 1996b, p. 352); i siciliani la chiamano *ğirāṣiyā* جراصيا ed è nota come «il chicco dei re», *ḥabb al-mulūk*, in Magreb e in Spagna. A Damasco è nota come *qirāsiyā Baʿlbek* قراسيا بعلبكي. Ce ne sono di varie specie, alcune dolci e altre salate, che rilassano lo stomaco, ma possono anche essere nocive per quest'ultimo (Sezgin 1996, vol. 3, p. 65). Nel *Glosario*, si riporta la variante di «ciliegia» in *ʿağamiyya*, ossia *širilyaš*, mentre la variante in volgare sarebbe *širola*. Corriente (2012, p. 61) attribuisce il termine شرله «prune douce» al sud italico in quanto molto vicino al termine شروله e alle varianti andaluse di origine latina rilevate nei suoi studi sull'opera di Abu al-Ḫayr al-Išbīlī. In realtà, sui termini dialettali vi è incertezza dovuta non soltanto alla mancanza delle vocali nel manoscritto analizzato da Palacios, ma anche alla confusione tra «ciliegia» (*Cerasus juliana*), «cirolero» (*Prunus domestica*) e «acerolo» (*Crataegus azarolus*) (si vedano Sezgin 1998, p. 241 e Corriente 2012, p. 94: *ğarāsiyā*). Nell'opera di al-Isrā'īlī: قراسيا بالسين هو حب الملوك يؤكل أصغر القراصيا فيه حلاوة ما «*qirāsīyā*, con la *sīn*, è il chicco dei re; si mangiano le ciliegie più piccole che sono un po' dolci» (Zaġla 1997, pp. 128, 141).

جري in magrebino نون e in andaluso سلباج: يسمى بالاندلس سلباج وبالمغرب نون (209). È un pesce indicato per la cura delle ulcere intestinali, per le vene varicose e per le ferite da armi appuntite come le frecce (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 94). Ibn Bayṭār riporta semplicemente il termine *ğirrī*, la variante magrebina e aggiunge che si tratta di un pesce che si trova in Egitto, nel Nilo (Sezgin 1996, vol. 1, pp. 350-351 e si veda anche Sezgin 1996b, p. 511). Si tratta di una sorta di anguilla il cui nome si rileva anche nell'*Opus Geographicum* (si vedano Oman 1966, p. 49 e Bombaci et al. 1974-1984, p. 36).

هدبة in arabo الحدوبا, in al-Andalus حنح ييسا: ويسمى بالاندلس حنح ييسا (266). Idrīsī lo descrive come un animale dai numerosi piedi che si trova sotto le giare,

indicato per la cura dei blocchi urinari e per l'ittero. Se assunto col miele è utile per la dispnea e la caduta dell'ugola (ipostafile). Può essere utilizzato in preparati da versare a gocce nell'orecchio per curarne i dolori (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 125). Maimonide riporta il nome arabo che è حمار قبّان e lo assimila all'*Oniscus asellus*, un rimedio per la febbre (Meyerhof 1996, p. 59). Ibn Bayṭār fornisce la variante di *hadba* هدبة «oniscidea» che identifica con un animale dai numerosi piedi che si trova sotto le giare dal nome حمار قبّان oppure عير قبّان. È un rimedio contro la dispnea (Sezgin 1996, vol. 3, p. 388). Ibn Bayṭār cita Dioscoride, secondo il quale هدبة è un animale con molte zampe dalle proprietà curative che vive sotto le giare; per Galeno, si tratta di un olio utilizzato contro il mal d'orecchio (Sezgin 1996c, vol. 2, p. 561). I centopiedi o millepiedi cui si riferiscono i testi sono raramente citati con il loro nome arabo هدبة. Ibn Bayṭār mette in evidenza il fatto che Idrīsī è uno degli autori che riportano il nome di questo animale (Sezgin 1996c, vol. 2, p. 562). Al-Ġāfiqī segnala i nomi *utdenna*, *utna* (Sezgin 1996b, p. 544).

هارون: الطلقون in Sicilia e كوكة in al-Andalus. يكون بصقلية هو الطلقون ويسمى بالاندلس كوكة (269). Non sono riuscita a reperire il termine هارون negli altri testi consultati. Idrīsī parla di un volatile notturno, mentre le altre fonti sono discordanti rispetto al sostantivo الطاليقون. Nel *Kitāb al-ǧāmi'*, Idrīsī descrive una sorta di uccello notturno del quale pare si mangi il cervello, ritenuto una sostanza stimolante e inebriante che si usa per ingrassare e rinforzare il corpo (Sezgin et al. 1995, pp. 126, 183). Secondo Ibn Bayṭār طليقون significa «amalgama di cuoio» (Sezgin 1996, vol. 2, p. 215 nota 1299). Per al-Isrā'īlī الطاليقون نوع من النحاس مدبروسنذكر تدبيره ان شاء الله تعال «il *ṭālīqūn* è un tipo di rame preparato e parleremo della sua preparazione a Dio l'Altissimo piacendo» (si vedano Zaġla 1997, p. 138; Cabo González 2009, p. 71). Nell'opera di al-Ġāfiqī, si hanno le tre varianti: طاليفيون, طيلاقيون, طيلافيون, ma nessuna corrisponde alla descrizione di Idrīsī (Sezgin 1996b, p. 530; si veda anche Corriente 1997, p. 333).

حُرف الصقالبة in al-Andalus si chiama ويسمى بالاندلس حرف البابلى الكبير الورق (342). È una pianta che aiuta la digestione del cibo, rinforza lo stomaco e sana le ferite. Il suo frutto viene essiccato e usato nel cibo al posto del pepe (Sezgin et al. 1995, pp. 164-165, 222-223). Nel *Glosario* troviamo حرف البابلى, in andaluso *corriola* o *buṭijšiella*. È anche detto لِبلاب in arabo [*Hiedra campestre*] (si vedano Sezgin 1998, pp. 85-87; Sezgin 1996b, p. 533). Secondo Maimonide, quando si parla di حرف البابلى si parla del *Lepidium sativum* che esiste in Spagna. حرف è il nome arabo di varie specie di crescione e di *Lepidium*. I semi sono impiegati come diuretico ed esteriormente come cataplasmi contro le ulcere scrofolose (si vedano Meyerhof 1996, pp. 80-81; Corriente 1997, p. 122: crescione campestre, *Lepidium* campestre e Sezgin 1996, vol. 1. pp. 427-431, dove si parla del حرف, ma non della varietà indicata da Idrīsī).

حماما لاذيلون in Sicilia chiamato الحرشف e in al-Andalus ينبت بصقليه ويسمى :اللصيف الحرشف ويسمى بالندلس اللصيف (346). È utile per la cura della rabbia canina (Sezgin et al. 1995, pp. 166, 225-226). Ibn Bayṭār riporta la variante andalusa لصيف *laṣṣīf* (si vedano Sezgin 1996, vol. 3, pp. 431-432; Corriente 1997, p. 480: carciofo selvatico). Nel *Glosario* troviamo la variante andalusa القنارية dal greco *kinara*, «carciofo» (Sezgin 1998, pp. 319-320), mentre حمامي si identifica con il piede di colombo, in greco *amumin* (Sezgin 1996, vol. 3, pp. 218-219). Maimonide riporta la variante di origine persiana الكنكرة, quella di origine ebraica o aramaica العكّوبة e, infine, quella magrebina افزان المقلوب, di possibile origina berbera (Meyerhof 1996, p. 76). Nell’opera di al-Isrā’īlī leggiamo: (حماما) بدله مكون كرماني أووج وقيل بدله وزنه اساؤون «piede di colombo, in sostituzione si può usare un composto di vite o calamo aromatico, si dice che il suo corrispondente per lo stesso peso sia l’*Asarum europaeum* (Zaġla 1997, p. 119). E ancora: الحرشف هو الاكنجر صمغ الحرشف منه وهو يشبه القرطم البري لكنه احسن منه «è il carciofo; se ne estrae la colla di carciofo; somiglia al cartamo selvatico, ma è migliore (si vedano Zaġla 1997, p. 128; Sezgin 1996b, pp. 515, 522).

حندقوقي variante araba الداق, andalusa النفل «trifoglio» ويسمى بالاندلس النفل (350). Secondo Idrīsī è una pianta estiva il cui frutto è commestibile ed è utile per la guarigione dalle malattie dello stomaco, per le ulcere degli occhi e per la vista. È inebriante. È utilizzata, altresì, per innalzare il livello di attenzione ed è efficace per la cura dell’utero (Sezgin et al. 1995, 168-169, 228). Secondo Ibn Bayṭār, è noto come حندقوقى بستاني ed è il loto. La varietà selvatica è chiamata ذرق oppure حباقي e cresce soprattutto in Libia. Si utilizza in caso di idropsia e patologie dei testicoli (Sezgin 1996, vol. 1, p. 466). Nel *Glosario* si dice che la *ḥundaqūqa* sia una varietà di loto chiamata dalla gente di al-Andalus *tríbolo* (Sezgin 1998, pp. 313-315). Secondo Corriente (1997, p. 141), la varietà da giardino (بستاني) indica la *Trigonella caerulea* e la varietà selvatica (بري) il trifoglio selvatico (*Trigonella corni culata*). نبق è il nome del suo frutto (Sezgin 1997, p. 4). Anche al-Isrā’īlī lo identifica con il loto: هو ثمر السدر «frutto dell’albero di loto» (si vedano Zaġla 1997, p. 144; Sezgin 1996b, p. 542). Maimonide riporta i termini النفل e الذرق, in spagnolo *ṭurbīla*. حندقوقى è il nome siriaco che designa la *Trigonella coerulea Ser.* e la حندقوقى بري il loto selvatico. النفل indica un’altra pianta, il nome spagnolo corrisponde al moderno *trébol* dal latino *Trifolium* (Meyerhof 1996, p. 72). Secondo Corriente, النفل, «erba medica», è un termine arabo che Idrīsī attribuisce all’andaluso (si vedano Corriente 2012, p. 60; Corriente 1997, p. 536: meliloto, *néfel*, nome botanico che indica la nimphaea bianca).

حي العالم الكبير secondo Idrīsī nome comune in al-Andalus وتسمية :لسيّبان العامة عندنا بالاندلس السيبان (359). È utile per i tumori, le ustioni da fuoco, le ferite gravi, il mal di testa, la diarrea, l’ulcera, i parassiti dello stomaco, la gonorrea e le infiammazioni degli occhi (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 172). Maimonide lo identifica con il *Sedum*, in spagnolo *ubīla raštaqa* «uvilla

rustica». Ce ne sono due specie: la prima, che ha dei semi oblunghi e pieni di liquido, in Magreb si chiama uva delle terrazze perché cresce sulle terrazze delle case. L’altra, che ha foglie rotonde come quelle del castagno e altrettanto piene di liquido, si chiama «flauto del pastore» e i magrebini la chiamano زلائف الملوك «scodella dei re». Si tratta di piante appartenenti alla famiglia delle *Crassulaceae*. Con il liquido si produceva un collirio (si vedano Meyerhof 1996, p. 80; Corriente 1997, p. 146: *Sempervivum arboreum*). Secondo Ibn Bayṭār si tratta del *Sempervivum*; Dioscoride, citato dallo stesso Ibn Bayṭār, descrive la pianta come una specie sempreverde dalle proprietà refrigeranti e astringenti che si utilizza per curare l’*herpes*, le infiammazioni degli occhi, le ulcere e i bruciori. Ne esiste una varietà chiamata حي العالم الصغير *Sempervivum minus* (si vedano Sezgin 1996, p. 475; Sezgin 1998, pp. 327-328; Corriente 1997: *Sedum acre*). Anche nel *Glosario* si definisce come una pianta sempre verde nota anche come uva canina (Sezgin 1998, pp. 273-274, 326-327). Al-Isrāʾīlī riporta solo: بدله من عصارة ورق الخس او ماء عينب الثعلب (حي العالم) «Il *Sempervivum*, può essere sostituito dal succo delle foglie di lattuga o l’acqua del *Solanum nigrum*» (Zaġla 1997, p. 119).

اسبيون varietà siciliana الزعون: ومنه نوع يسمى ايضا بصقلية الزعون (fuori numerazione). Secondo Idrīsī, si tratta della «barba di capra». I suoi fiori sono bianchi e si chiama الفتح *al-f.t.ḥ* (si veda Corriente 1997, p. 389: *f.tḥ cistus*) è noto anche come albero di استب. Secondo Corriente (1997, p. 13 e 2012, p. 60), la variante appena citata sarebbe romanza e dovrebbe leggersi *istíp,* ossia *Cistus polymorphus*, o *astab*, *Cistus laudaniferus*. Una varietà che in Sicilia è nota come الزعون è più secca e ha le foglie più piccole (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 174). In al-Ġāfiqī troviamo la variante *isfius* (Sezgin 1996b, p. 534). Maimonide segnala il nome spagnolo *bsīl* «psillio». Si tratta dei semi del *Plantago psyllium L*. il cui nome اسفيوس deriva dal persiano *aspğūs* «orecchio di cavallo». Il nome البزقوطونا (*bizr-qūṭūnā*) è mantenuto in spagnolo nella forma *zargatona* (Mayerhof 1996, p. 28).

يطفوسف (il testo è privo dei punti diacritici) Idrīsī riporta la variante siciliana صيفلان: ويسمى بصقلية صيفلان (fuori numerazione). I suoi semi sono commestibili; è il cocomero o l’anguria (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 174). Non ho trovato nessuno dei due termini nelle fonti magrebino-andaluse consultate.

حماما in Sicilia حسزيو (*ḥusn yawm*?), يسمى بصقلية حسزيو (1, parte 2). È piccante, costipante ed essiccante, ottimo per calmare il mal di testa dovuto al freddo e tra le sue proprietà c’è quella di portare a maturazione i tumori e di dare sollievo per i gonfiori dell’occhio. È impiegato per i preparati medicinali e per numerosi trattamenti; il suo equivalente è l’*Asarum europaeum*. Secondo Pitagora elimina la flatulenza, purifica lo stomaco

e il fegato (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 176). Ibn Bayṭār riporta la variante dal greco *Amomum* e cita, a sua volta, Pitagora per il quale questa pianta è carminativa, purifica lo stomaco e fortifica il fegato. Per Ḥunayn Ibn Iṣḥāq (m. 873): è caldo e secco al secondo grado, è inebriante, ma ha proprietà soporifere:

> La détermination de l’amoum a soulevé bien des discussions et conduit à bien des divergences. (Sezgin 1996, vol. 1, pp. 450-451)[2]

L’identificazione di questa pianta crea, dunque, qualche difficoltà, ma dovrebbe trattarsi di una varietà di cardamomo.

طراغين in Sicilia سقرينوس è noto anche come طرغاني: يسمى بصقلية سقرينس (48, parte 2). Cresce in Sicilia sull’Etna a Ṭ.rabū. I suoi semi sono utili per liberare lo stomaco e per gli edemi da tumori. Guarisce i tumori dell’utero e calma i dolori (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 195). Secondo Corriente, si tratta dell’*Hypericum hircinium,* una varietà cretese, o della *Ephedra dystachia* (Corriente 1997, p. 328).

كرسنة Idrīsī riporta la variante in arabo كسيمت e quella in andaluso العلس: ويسمى العلس بالاندلس (92, parte 2). Tra le numerose proprietà di questa pianta, c’è quella di favorire la circolazione e accrescere il sangue nelle urine. La farina della كرسنة tritata finemente giova allo stomaco, al sangue e stimola la diuresi. Se mescolata con miele, cura le ferite, le pustole da latte, la vitiligine e le macchie della pelle. Questa pianta aiuta, inoltre, a guarire i tumori maligni alle mammelle, il fuoco persiano (lue venerea), le ferite dell’ulcera da stress e i morsi. Calma la dissenteria, le coliche, aiuta chi è deperito e cura le ferite dovute al freddo (Sezgin et al. 1995, pp. 214-215). Ibn Bayṭār la chiama *kersenna* e aggiunge che si tratta di una pianta utile per le punture di scorpione, le malattie delle gengive e gli edemi polmonari (Sezgin 1996, vol. 3, p. 164). Nel *Glosario* العلس è *iščaliya* che indica una specie di grano. Il nome scientifico è *Triticum spelta*, in greco *khondros* (Sezgin 1998, pp. 139-140). Secondo al-Ġāfiqī, è sinonimo di بخرة, in latino *Ervilia* (Sezgin 1996c, vol. 2, pp. 282-283). Anche Maimonide identifica la pianta con la *Vicia ervillia*. Il nome arabo è كرسنة, *karsana* o *karsanna*, dall’ebraico o dall’aramaico, la radice semitica del nome sembra derivare dal sanscrito *ķršņa* «nero» (Mayerhof 1996, p. 92). Corriente registra *ʿalas* «specie di grano» come termine arabo che Idrīsī reputa specifico dell’arabo andaluso (si vedano Corriente 2012, p. 60; 1997, p. 361). Si tratta di una varietà di farro.

2 Si veda anche Sezgin 1998, pp. 218-219 «piede di colombo»; Zaġla 1997, p. 119; Corriente 1997, p. 140: *Amomum racemosum*).

كرمة بيضا in Sicilia nota come ينبت بصقلية بقلعة الشراط ويسمى حسن يوم :حُسن يوم «Cresce in Sicilia a Qalʿa al-Š.rāṭ e si chiama *ḥusn yawm*» (121, parte 2). Si assume abitualmente contro la stitichezza, favorisce la diuresi, cura la splenite e guarisce le ferite. Elimina le macchie, le verruche le pustole da latte e le macchie nere che restano sulla pelle in seguito alla guarigione delle ferite della scabbia. Cura, inoltre, l’amaurosi dell’occhio, calma il dolore del patereccio, apre e fa scoppiare i bubboni. È utile per il mal di testa e contro il veleno di vipera. Può essere inebriante e fa aumentare il flusso mestruale. Impastata col miele e ridotta in pastiglie è utile per la dispnea, la tosse e il dolore dovuto alle gambe curve. Guarisce i tumori, cura l’utero delle partorienti, purifica il corpo e rende più belli il colore e la pelle. Si usa come cosmetico per colorare il viso di bianco o di rosso e per questo i siciliani la chiamano حُسن يوم perché il rosso rimane per un giorno intero (anche in Corriente 1997, p. 126: *ḥusn yawm baʿd yawm*’ è un cosmetico fatto di cera e *cereus* utilizzato per illuminare il viso; *sonchus*). Ci sono donne che lo usano per colorirsi e idratarsi il viso con un po’ di polvere unita a cera e polvere bianca, lo applicano la sera e lo lavano il giorno successivo. È miracoloso per lisciare il viso. Il decotto della sua radice è utile contro il gonfiore della milza e aiuta la salivazione. Se si fanno tinture con il suo frutto, lenisce le ferite ulcerate e non ulcerate della scabbia (Sezgin et al. 1995, 229-230, 273-274). Secondo Ibn Bayṭār, questa pianta è la vigna bianca o *Bryionia*, si tratta della فشيرا (Sezgin 1996, vol. 3, p. 154). Essa ha proprietà epilatorie, provoca il vomito e aiuta a espellere i liquidi in eccesso. Nel *Glosario*, invece, la pianta viene chiamata *abobriella*, *nueza blanca* o vite bianca: «se llama, en ʿaŷamiyya, abobriella, que singifica calabacilla» (Sezgin 1998, pp. 1-2). Un altro nome è طنّة (*ṭinna*) [*al-karma al-bayḍā*’] (p. 299). Mentre in al-Andalus è nota altresì come هزّاز جُشّان o *Bryonia alba* (p. 359; si veda anche Sezgin 1996c, p. 545). In al-Isrā’īlī si dice che كل واحد منهما بدل عن الآخر (كرمة بيضاء وكرمة سوداء) «la vigna bianca e la vigna nera, entrambe si possono usare l’una al posto dell’altra» (Zaġla 1997, pp. 121, 141). Maimonide aggiunge che la pianta si usa contro l’idropsia e le malattie della pelle (Meyerhof 1996, pp. 154-155).

كُرّاث بري la variante andalusa riportata da Idrīsī è تسمية اهل اشبانيا :كراث الكرم كرّاث الكرم (127, parte 2). Mangiare questa pianta secondo il geografo è pericoloso per lo stomaco. Essa favorisce sonni sereni, è utile per l’epistassi e per l’infiammazione dovuta ai morsi delle vipere. Applicata in gocce nell’orecchio, calma il dolore; le tinture fatte col suo succo e applicate sulle palpebre curano la nictalopia. È utile, infine, per le emorroidi. Gli algerini lo chiamano سومكُراث (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 233). Ibn Bayṭār segnala la pronuncia كَراث e identifica la pianta con la *Daphné tartonraira*. Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī (m. 895), citato dallo stesso Ibn Bayṭār, afferma che la pianta cura la tubercolosi, si impiega contro la lebbra tubercolotica, la malinconia

e la rabbia (Sezgin 1996, pp. 165-166). Nel *Glosario*, كَرّاث significa asfodelo (Sezgin 1998, pp. 4-5). Secondo Maimonide il كُرّاث بري è chiamato طيطان. Il nome كُراث è probabilmente semitico; il كُراث بري indica probabilmente il porro selvatico *Allium rotundum* (Meyerhof 1996, p. 99). Secondo Corriente, il كرّاث الكرم è una specie di porro e il termine non sarebbe specifico dell’andaluso, ma apparterrebbe all’arabo «comune», cioè non marcato geograficamente (si vedano Corriente 2012, p. 60; 2007, p. 457).

الاذيون oppure لاذن in Sicilia detto برغون: ويسمى هدا النوع بصقلية برعون (147, parte 2). Secondo Idrīsī, si tratta del *Cistus creticus*, chiamato anche فيسيوس; la sua particolarità è che ha il gusto del grano. Si chiama «barba di caprone» (*Tragopogon*) e in arabo è detta الفتح (*al-fatḥ*). In al-Andalus عوام بلادنا يسمون هذا النبات اسنب «chiamano questa pianta *ʾs.n.b.*». È astringente, è adatto a chi ha un’ulcera ed è utile contro le piaghe. Le sue foglie, se cotte con acqua sono utili per la strozzatura dell’utero e i tumori. È utile contro la caduta dei capelli. Se se ne fanno profumi è utile contro la coriza. Il suo unguento sana le ferite; se versato a gocce nell’orecchio con polvere di rosa lo guarisce dai dolori. Può stimolare l’urina. Può trovarsi tra le medicine calmanti, antidolorifiche, quelle per la tosse e gli unguenti che sono una prescrizione medica (Sezgin et al. 1995, pp. 243-244, 289-290). Ibn Bayṭār riporta la voce *Lāden*, in latino *Ladanum*. Egli cita, inoltre, Dioscoride il quale afferma che un’altra specie di «ciste» è chiamata ليدون, che ha le stesse proprietà astringenti. Con la sua resina si prepara una sostanza medicinale liquida. È un calmante che può essere usato diluito, ad esempio nella camomilla. Calma la tosse. Si impiega contro la dissenteria e problemi allo stomaco (si vedano Sezgin 1996, vol. 3, pp. 214-215; Sezgin 1996b, p. 526, si veda anche Corriente 1997, p. 479). Secondo Maimonide, è la resina che si estrae dalla pianta *Cistus creticus L.* e *Cistus ladaniferus L.* La resina emessa resta incollata al pelo delle capre. Si estrae con una doppia cinghia di cuoio che si agita sul vegetale. Il *Laudanum* migliore è quello bianco, trasparente e cereo; si conserva a lungo, è astringente e si usa nella preparazione di colliri (Meyerhof 1996, p. 104).

لوفا افشينا in Sicilia شوكة ابليس e in al-Andalus اشينية اليه: اهل صقلية يوسمونها شوكة ابليس واهل الاندلس يسمونها اشينية اليه (156, parte 2). Il medico andaluso Ibn Ǧulǧul (m. 994), citato da Idrīsī, chiama questa varietà *al-rḏālah* e Dioscoride la definisce لوفا افيثيا. Masticare la radice di questa pianta calma i dolori dei denti e bere tre oboli del suo decotto è utile contro i dolori persistenti delle gambe e i bruciori intimi (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 248). Anche Ibn Bayṭār la chiama لوقاقنيثا *lūqāqanṯā* e Dioscoride *Leucas*. Al-Ġāfiqī riporta la voce del traduttore siriano Abū Yaḥyā Ibn al-Batrīq (m. 86) il quale lo identifica, invece, con il crescione bianco حرف ابيض, mentre Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq lo denomina *safand isfīd* سفند اسفيد. Si trova anche per indicare la امداريا البيضاء dice sia una sorta di mirra. Anche la definizione di questo termine è, dunque,

confusa (Sezgin 1996, vol. 3, p. 247). Nell'opera di al-Ġāfiqī, si dice che il termine andaluso potrebbe essere la *ušna* che indica una varietà di licheni o muschi. È una pianta astringente, emolliente che si trova sui pini. Idrīsī, citato da al-Ġāfiqī, dice che fa crescere carni molli nelle piaghe. Triturata e impiegata come collirio, aguzza la vista. Berne un decotto, insieme a del vino, è utile contro le punture di animali velenosi. Nel semicupio, lenisce i dolori e la stanchezza (vol. 1, pp. 84-85). Sempre nell'opera di al-Ġāfiqī, troviamo la variante con la *ṯā'* (Sezgin 1996b, p. 527). Potrebbe avere un legame con il termine rilevato da Corriente *šayān*, *xaína*: *Sempervivum arboreum*; *šeyān* in *fārsī* era il sangue di drago (Corriente 1997, p. 299).

لثخيطس كبير in Sicilia è chiamata حثاوة: واهل صقلية يسمونه حثاوة. L'autore cita Ibn Sīnā il quale denomina questa pianta *ḥ.rba Aspidium lonchitis*. È una pianta che cresce nella terra morbida e sabbiosa e ha foglie simili a quelle del cavolo, grandi, spiegazzate dal colore tendente al rosso; ha rami lunghi e con più foglie. La gente di al-Andalus la chiama erba del falegname (Corriente 2012, p. 61). Bere il decotto fatto con la sua radice stimola la diuresi. Le foglie si applicano sulle ferite oppure si riscaldano e si mettono sulle tumescenze (Sezgin et al. 1995, pp. 259-260).

مشتها o مشتهى in Sicilia è nota come السربة: ينبت بصقلية ويسمى السربه (195, parte 2). È un grande albero che somiglia a un piccolo melo, ma i suoi frutti maturano difficilmente. È astringente, le foglie e le spine hanno proprietà profilattiche e rendono lo stomaco molto secco (p. 268). Nel *Glosario*, è definito «carnilla, mostellar, mostaco» e si dice «la llaman carnilla los ʿaŷam» (Sezgin 1998, p. 70). Si distingue la voce زعرور «lazzeruolo» che indica lo stesso مشتهى presso la gente di Zaragoza; in *ʿağamiyya* si chiama *níšporat*, in arabo نِلك e in andaluso زعرور (p. 195). مشتهى in andaluso corrisponde a ثمرة الدُب *[fruto del oso]*e in *ʿağamiyya abuboḥ*. In pratica, in volgare, i due termini زعرور e مشتهى erano sinonimi. Un altro modo per indicare la مشتهى in al-Andalus è رِجلة حرشاء (p. 289). Maimonide lo identifica con il frutto dell'albero dell'orso, dal nome النُلك (Meyerhof 1996, p. 65). Il frutto di questo albero è chiamato anche الغُبيراء (p. 204). Secondo Corriente, la variante siciliana سربه «sorbo», deriva dal latino *Sorbus*, che non soltanto era penetrato nel siciliano, ma è utilizzato tutt'oggi nel maltese ed è stato rilevato anche in una *ḫarğa* andalusa (si vedano Corriente 2012, p. 61; 1997, pp. 294, 278).

ملياق in Sicilia è الشالوقة: بصقلية يسمى الشلوقة (199, parte 2). È una pianta che somiglia al carice, foglie comprese. Mezzo bicchiere del decotto delle sue foglie, bevuto ogni giorno per sette giorni, giova all'ulcera. È uno spermicida (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 269). Nessuno dei due termini indicati da Idrīsī ha trovato corrispondenza nelle altre fonti consultate.

مغر سطس in Sicilia ينبت بصقلية وسماهُ فالا مغر سطس :فالا مغر سطس e in al-Andalus اهل الاندلس يسمونه الشقاقُل:شقاقل (202, parte 2). *Pastinaca sativa*. Idrīsī la classifica tra le piante che crescono in Sicilia. Le sue foglie sono lunghe e simili a quelle della canna persiana. È una pianta dai fiori bianchi che ha un buon odore; le sue radici crescono sulla terra e sono molto lunghe. Ha proprietà eccitanti e rafforza il coito. Bere il succo di questa pianta stimola la diuresi ed elimina lo sperma (pp. 270, 314-315). Ibn Bayṭār cita il medico andaluso Ibn Wāfid (m. 1074) secondo il quale الشقاقُل è pianta calda, umida al primo grado e afrodisiaca. Anche secondo al-Rāzī e Avicenna si tratta di un afrodisiaco. Al-Rāzī nel suo *al-Manṣūrī* sostiene che questa pianta riscaldi lo stomaco e il fegato, sia anoressizzante e accresca la secrezione di sperma (Sezgin 1996, vol. 2, pp. 338-339). Nel *Glosario* troviamo la variante *ʿağamiyya* الشقاقِل, vale a dire شحملة. È sinonimo di مشتهى, رِجلة حرشاء (Sezgin 1998, pp. 291-292). Al-Isrāʾīlī fornisce, anche in questo caso, informazioni molto sintetiche: هو الجزر البري «è la carota selvatica» (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 136). Al-Ġāfiqī riporta la variante con la *sīn* (Sezgin 1996b, p. 519). Secondo Maimonide, شقلِق è ciò che in spagnolo si chiama *qunīla* o *šağmīla*, ossia «carota selvatica». L’origine del termine arabo non è chiara, probabilmente è persiana e denota le piante ombrellifere dalla radice commestibile. Il nome spagnolo *šağmīla* sarebbe una lettura errata di شحمالة la cui origine è sconosciuta (si vedano Meyerhof 1996, p. 181; Corriente 1997, p. 287: *secacul*; Corriente 2012, p. 59 attribuisce il termine *šğmālh* «*sécacul*» al romanzo andaluso).

4 In guisa di conclusione

L’analisi lessicale del *Kitāb al-ğāmiʿ*, a tutt’oggi mai condotta, si è dimostrata fruttuosa per l’acquisizione di nuovi elementi linguistici utili per lo studio dell’arabo medievale occidentale e delle sue varianti. In relazione al duplice obiettivo che mi proponevo, alcuni dati di sicuro interesse sono emersi.

Per quanto riguarda le peculiarità e le eventuali somiglianze del lessico botanico siculo rispetto a quello andaluso, si nota che alcuni lemmi descritti come «andalusi» nel trattato di Idrīsī sono attestati anche in altre fonti andaluse: ad esempio, الينق (83) «caglio» (Sezgin et al. 1995, p. 38), di uso comune in arabo andaluso, si ritrova anche nell’opera di Ibn Bayṭār (Mayerhof 1996, p. 18).

In altri casi esistono, invece, delle differenze tra il lessico attestato in al-Andalus e quello siciliano. Ad esempio, الدوثر (93), nome del *Centaurea behen* in Sicilia (Sezgin, 1995, p. 47), è برشانة (*yerba šāna*) e مطرشانة in al-Andalus. Secondo Corriente (2012, p. 61), il sostantivo الدوثر non è caratteristico dell’arabo di Sicilia; è, tuttavia, interessante notare che esso non è attestato in opere di botanica precedenti al *Kitāb* di Idrīsī.

Altra casistica è quella dei termini non marcati geograficamente e utilizzati in varie zone del mondo arabo: fra questi, per esempio, troviamo حب الملوك (199) «ciliegia», considerato da Idrīsī un termine andaluso (Sezgin, 1995, p. 91) e حسن يوم con il quale si denominano la noce metella in al-Andalus, ossia البقم (Sezgin, 1995, p. 91), una varietà di cardamomo, الحمامي (p. 176), e la vigna bianca, الكرمه البيضا (pp. 229-230). Si tratta di un nome attribuito ai semplici per via di una loro qualità o di un loro uso e che indica varietà di piante totalmente diverse in Sicilia e in al-Andalus. Simile al precedente è il caso di الحمرا termine che si riferisce chiaramente a una sostanza inebriante e che indica, nello specifico, il giusquiamo nell'arabo di Sicilia. جراسيا, rilevato in Sicilia nella variante جراصيا, distinto dallo spagnolo شراسيا per la sua pronuncia con la consonante palatale ش. Anche i termini che si riferiscono alla ciliegia non sono marcati geograficamente, ma sono di uso comune in arabo. Alcuni lemmi arabi non marcati geograficamente attribuiti all'arabo andaluso, oltre a نفل «erba medica» e علس «specie di grano», sono غرنوق «gru» e ميس *Celtis* (Corriente 2012, p. 60).

Il lessico arabo-siculo e quello arabo-andaluso presentano, comunque, differenze evidenti: la civetta notturna, ad esempio, è denominata الطلقون in Sicilia e كوكة in al-Andalus (p. 126); il piede di colombo o carciofo selvatico è noto come حرشف in Sicilia e لصيف in al-Andalus (p. 166); la *Leucas* (156, parte 2) in Sicilia è detta شولة ابليس e in al-Andalus اشينية ليه (p. 248).حثاوة (178, parte 2) indica l'*Aspidium lonchitis* e in al-Andalus è nota come حشيشة النجّار «erba del falegname» (pp. 259-260). السربة (195, parte 2), latinismo da *sorbus*, secondo Idrīsī (p. 268) sarebbe specifico dell'arabo di Sicilia per indicare il sorbo, detto زعرور in arabo andaluso. La *Pastinaca sativa*, infine, in Sicilia si chiama فالا مغر سطس e in al-Andalus شقاقل (202, parte 2).

Tra i termini che Idrīsī attribuisce all'arabo andaluso, troviamo النفل, «loto selvatico», che indica in realtà il trifoglio o l'erba medica. Non si tratta comunque di un termine specificamente andaluso, bensì di uso comune in arabo (Corriente, 2012, p. 60). العلس (92, parte 2) sarebbe il nome andaluso della كرسنة, una varietà di farro; ma anch'esso è un termine di uso comune in arabo (Corriente 2012, p. 60).

Di alcuni nomi siciliani non abbiamo nell'opera il corrispondente andaluso: الزعون (Sezgin, 1995, p. 174) indica la barba di capra in Sicilia, dove la pianta è nota anche come استب: la variante indicata da Idrīsī nel romanzo andaluso, secondo Corriente (2012, p. 60) si leggerebbe *istíp* (*Cistus polymorphus*), oppure *astab* (*Cistus ladaniferus*) (Corriente 1997, p. 13). Con il termine صيفلان si indicava nell'Isola il cocomero o l'anguria (Sezgin, 1995, p. 174). Il سقرينوس, noto anche come طرغاني (p. 195), denoterebbe secondo Corriente (1997, p. 328) l'*Hypericum hircinium* o l'*Ephedra dystachia*.

Si segnala la particolarità di alcuni termini con evidenti origini latine o italiche: «melanzana» in arabo بادنجان, si rileva nell'opera come ميلينزانا (148), possibile traslitterazione del termine romanzo usato in Sicilia (Sezgin, 1995, p. 68). Idrīsī fornisce un lungo paragrafo, perlopiù copiato da Ibn Bayṭār,

nel quale scrive *melanzâna* come nome greco-bizantino e بيض الجان *bayḍ al-ğān* come sinonimo berbero. Quest'ultimo è un'alterazione in arabo del sostantivo persiano *bādinğān*. Lo scrittore bizantino Simeon Seth, vissuto nell'XI secolo, riporta il termine *matitánion* o *matizánion* (Sezgin 1996c, p. 286). Ancora, tra i numerosi termini, è attestato اكراب «capra» (240), definito «latino» da Idrīsī, sul quale si nota una evidente influenza di un dialetto sud-italico o del siciliano (Corriente 2012, p. 61).

Oltre a quest'ultimo, tra gli esempi definiti «siciliani» da Idrīsī, vi sono il già citato دوثر «*behen*», attribuibile all'arabo, سربه «sorbo», شرله «prugna dolce» di origine latina o sud-italica. Attribuibili al latino sono poi anche sostantivi di uso magrebino زنبوج «olivo selvatico» (294) e اللهو (110, parte 2), che in andaluso indica il *Physalis* (Corriente 2012, p. 61). Tra i duecento termini attribuiti al latino da Idrīsī, sono di origine italiana ابلاط «blatta» (170) e اكوه «acqua» (233, parte 2); di origine latina sono, invece, بنيه «vigna» (123, parte 2), نسطرسيوم «*nasturium*» (340) e توس «incenso» (89, parte 2). Altri sono definiti *ifrānğī*, ad esempio, نيطرم «*nitrum*, borace» (161), بيكس ليكض «*pix liquida*, pece» (296) e فهرم «vetro» (322) (Corriente 2012, pp. 58-59). Alcuni termini definiti *ifrānğī* derivano dal francese come بلت da *belette* «donnola» (76), آل بوف «œil de bœuf» occhio di bue (120), فيره da *verre* «vetro» (322), لمسون «chiocciola» (36, parte 2) e جفره da *chèvre* «capra» (240, parte 2) (Corriente 2012, p. 59). Altre voci definite *ifrānğī* sono, invece, catalane come ايوه da *aigua* «acqua» (233, parte 2) e فسك «vischio» (227) (Corriente 2012, p. 62). ارجنت فيف «argentovivo» è attribuito al latino da Idrīsī, è invece probabilmente di origine italiana, come suggerisce la forma araba, sebbene secondo Corriente (2012, p. 59) sarebbe di origine francese (da *vifargent*). Altri esempi sono نبه فرته «nappa forte», فردرم «verderame» (316), جيجه «ciccia» (174, parte 2) o ترتر «tortora». Derivano dal volgare romanzo di al-Andalus, ad esempio, i composti con يربه (*yérba*) «erba», اطريقه «grano», dal castigliano *trigo* (334),شجماله *Pastinaca sativa* (226) e ارجبلطه «mandragora» (76, parte 2) (Corriente 2012, p. 59). Tra i sostantivi berberi riportati da Idrīsī troviamo molti nomi di animali, quali اسردن «mulo» (165) e الغم «cammello» (206), che non sono attestati in altre opere di botanica precedenti. In altri casi, le voci berbere sono meno precise, come ad esempio اسكس (218) che si trova al posto di اسلن «abalone» (Corriente 2012, p. 59).

Tra i lemmi originali introdotti da Idrīsī e non attestati nelle fonti andaluse coeve troviamo i termini andalusi حشيشة النجّار «erba del falegname» e ذهبي *Leonurus* o «ciclamino» (41), le voci romanze فليجنك «cinquefoglie» (124) e بكه مرينه *Phoca vitulina* (213), دوثر «*behen*» (2), سربه «sorbo» (195, parte 2), la variante siciliana dell'italiano «capra» اكراب (240) e شرله «prugna dolce» (199), in uso in Sicilia (Corriente 2012, p. 61). La variante *serbal* è attestata nel castigliano e nasce dall'aggiunta al termine arabo del suffisso *–ál*, applicato a nomi di piante e alberi (Corriente 2012, p. 61 nota17).

Questa prima analisi lessicale dell'opera, che non costituisce che il pri-

mo passo di un'analisi più vasta, si è dimostrata fruttuosa: ha permesso infatti di ottenere nuove informazioni sul lessico siciliano medievale e ha altresì fornito dati utili per lo studio dell'arabo andaluso. In particolare, i primi risultati presentati in questo contributo hanno mostrato che il lessico botanico siciliano e quello andaluso avevano caratteristiche differenti e originali. Lo studio del *Kitāb* ha inoltre reso possibile conoscere termini botanici in uso nell'arabo Sicilia e in quello di al-Andalus mai rilevati in opere di botanica coeve permettendo di datarne l'uso nell'arabo di Sicilia e nei dialetti magrebini medievali e contribuendo così a definire un tassello della storia della lingua araba e delle sue varietà.

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Šibh al-ǧazīra al-'arabiyya di Salwā al-Na'īmī
Per una nuova identità araba

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Abstract In her latest novel, *Šibh al-ǧazīra al-'arabiyya* (2012), Salwā al-Na'īmī narrates the experience of exile of a Syrian woman who lives in France. Through the protagonist's first-person account, the author questions the meaning of nation, membership to a collective and identity for an Arab woman settled in France. The main character embodies the exiled subject – or the 'nomadic subject' (Braidotti 2002) – who severs her ties with family, nation, Ba'ṯ's party and religion. Her painful process of liberation leads her to a global re-signification of the notion of Arab identity. The protagonist succeeds to release the meaning of Arab identity from the idea of normative membership to a collective. al-Na'īmī's choice to narrate the experience of exile in Arabic helps to restore a link between the individual and the community, here identified with the community of speakers.

Negli ultimi decenni la Siria ha assistito all'aumento della produzione romanzesca. Sempre più autori – uomini e donne – si dedicano alla scrittura e scelgono di esprimersi attraverso il romanzo. Forse proprio perché, grazie al suo essere «di natura proteiforme (come vuole la lettura che ne dà Bachtin), privo di regole o di costanti uniche, da cui la sua plasticità (sempre Bachtin), e portatore di una forte ambizione assimilatrice che lo induce ad appropriarsi di nuovi domini cannibalizzandoli (è la nota tesi di Virginia Woolf)» (Sinopoli 2002, p. 97), il romanzo si rivela il genere più adatto a registrare i cambiamenti della realtà con cui si pone in dialogo. Ed esattamente al dialogo tra *fiction* e referente si rifanno alcune tra le più recenti analisi del romanzo arabo contemporaneo. In uno studio sulla relazione 'passionale' tra romanzo arabo, tradizione e modernità, Ouyang (2012, pp. 1-34) mette in rilievo il potenziale 'performativo'[1] della letteratura, ed in particolare del romanzo. Quest'ultimo non si limita a veicolare il referente tramite il linguaggio della finzione, ma contribuisce a creare e modellare la realtà stessa. Il romanzo assume un ruolo attivo, facendosi motore e promotore dell'immaginario collettivo, attraverso

1 Mi riferisco alla nozione di *performance* in quanto «pratica discorsiva che mette in atto o produce ciò che nomina» (Mambrini 2010, p. 56).

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una parola che, lungi dall'essere passivo mezzo di rappresentazione, si fa creatrice. Del resto il sentimento nazionale arabo nasce anche grazie all'ausilio del romanzo che contribuisce a creare l'idea di qualcosa che ancora non c'è: la narrazione di un sentimento di appartenenza innesca la creazione dell'entità immaginaria e immaginata che è la nazione. Ne sono un esempio significativo *Zaynab* (1913) di Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal e *'Awdat al-rūḥ* (Il ritorno dello spirito, 1933) di Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, in cui la formazione del giovane egiziano si fa metafora della formazione della nazione e del suo difficile percorso di ingresso nella modernità (Paniconi 2012, pp. 39-152).

Volgendo lo sguardo al campo letterario siriano, attualmente si assiste all'aumento delle traduzioni di romanzi verso le lingue straniere. Prendendo come esempio il caso italiano, solo negli ultimi quattro anni – dal 2010 al 2014 – sono stati tradotti almeno sei romanzi di autori siriani per i quali si rimanda alla bibliografia. Parallelamente all'aumento della pubblicazione dei romanzi in lingua araba, si assiste dunque alla loro circolazione al di fuori dei confini nazionali per raggiungere un pubblico più vasto.

Una delle principali caratteristiche della narrativa siriana contemporanea è la grande varietà di stili e linguaggi. Anche se non si può parlare di un'organizzazione del romanzo siriano attorno a correnti letterarie strutturate, si può tuttavia individuare una serie di tematiche condivise che ne segna le maggiori tendenze.

L'impegno politico e sociale si rivela restare il perno del romanzo in Siria. Gli scrittori contemporanei continuano il percorso inaugurato dalle generazioni precedenti, focalizzandosi sulla sfera individuale, sull'interiorità del personaggio e distaccandosi dalle grandi narrazioni ideologiche.[2] Alcuni autori scelgono di dissotterrare periodi sanguinosi della storia contemporanea del proprio Paese. Il romanzo diventa uno strumento di analisi e revisione della storia segnata dalla repressione ad opera di un regime – quello della famiglia al-Asad – al potere da più di quarant'anni.[3] Ne sono un esempio *Abanūs* (Ebano, 2004) di Rūzā Yāsīn Ḥasan, *Madīḥ al-karāhiya* (L'elogio dell'odio, 2006) di Ḫālid Ḫalīfa, *Ka-mā yanbaġī li-nahr* (Come deve essere per un fiume, 2007) e *'Āṣīy al-dam* (Sangue ribelle, 2011) di Manhal al-Sarrāǧ. Gli autori di questi romanzi affrontano periodi controversi della storia siriana – sui quali, decenni addietro, sarebbe stato inconcepibile scrivere – come la violenta campagna di repressione ad opera di Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad contro i Fratelli Musulmani, negli anni Ottanta, che culminò con il tristemente celebre massacro della città di Ḥamā.

2 Per un'analisi del cambiamento del campo intellettuale siriano si considerino, a titolo di esempio, Yaseen Hassan 2012; Cooke 2007 e Tayyara 2002-2003.

3 Per un'analisi approfondita della storia del regime degli al-Asad in Siria rimando a Trombetta 2013 e Balanche 2006.

Altri romanzi, come *al-Mutarǧim al-ḫā’in* (Traduttore traditore, 2008) di Fawwāz Ḥaddād, *Warrāq al-ḥubb* (Copista d’amore, 2008) di Ḫalīl Ṣuwayliḥ, *Kursī* (Una sedia, 2009) di Dīma Wannūs, *La-hā marāyā* (Lei ha degli specchi, 2011) di Samar Yazbik, *Ḥurrās al-hawā’* (I guardiani dell’aria, 2009) e *Brūfā* (Bozza, 2011) di Rūzā Yāsīn Ḥasan, *Šibh al-ǧazīra al-‘arabiyya* (Penisola araba, 2012) di Salwā al-Na‘īmī sono consacrati alla rappresentazione degli effetti del potere repressivo sull’individuo. Non è la storia siriana ad essere al centro della narrazione, ma le differenti forme che il potere repressivo – politico, etnico, religioso e confessionale – assume all’interno di una società governata dalla logica di gruppo.

Anche l’influenza della tradizione e dei costumi sulla sfera individuale è tra i temi oggetto di una problematizzazione all’interno di svariati romanzi pubblicati di recente. Mi riferisco a *Burhān al-‘asal* (La prova del miele, 2007) di Salwā al-Na‘īmī, *Hazā’im mubakkira* (Sconfitte precoci, 2007) di Nabīl Sulaymān, *Rā’iḥat al-qirfa* (L’odore della cannella, 2008) di Samar Yazbik e *Banāt al-barārī* (Le ragazze delle terre selvagge, 2011) di Mahā Ḥasan. Temi quali la libertà sessuale, il delitto d’onore e i ruoli di genere si fanno metafora dell’esperienza individuale, in una società nella quale il soggetto, per essere riconosciuto, deve identificarsi tramite l’appartenenza ad un gruppo.

Le memorie del carcere, a cavallo tra *fiction* e rappresentazione documentaristica, formano un’altra tendenza che si è andata particolarmente affermando negli ultimi anni. In questo filone si inseriscono *al-Qawqa‘* (La conchiglia, 2008) di Muṣṭafā Ḫalīfa, *Nīġātīf: Riwāya tawṯīqiyya* (Negativi: Un romanzo documentario, 2008) di Rūzā Yāsīn Ḥasan e *Bi-l-ḫalāṣ, yā šabāb* (Basta, ragazzi!, 2012) di Yāsīn al-Ḥāǧǧ Ṣāliḥ.

La più recente produzione romanzesca è segnata anche dalla comparsa dei primi esempi di narrativa dedicati ai profondi sconvolgimenti del contesto socio-politico siriano, in seguito allo scoppio di quella che – ai suoi inizi – era stata definita Primavera siriana. Nello specifico mi riferisco a *Ayyām fī Bābā ‘Amrū* (I giorni di *Bābā ‘Amrū*, 2012) di ‘Abd Allāh Maksūr, *Bānsiyūn Maryam* (Pensione Maryam, 2012) di Nabīl al-Mulḥim e *Ṭubūl al-ḥubb* (Tamburi d’amore, 2013) di Mahā Ḥasan.

Nonostante la narrativa siriana contemporanea risulti essere contrassegnata da una manifesta eterogeneità e dalla conseguente difficoltà di classificare le opere secondo correnti letterarie strutturate, è possibile individuare un denominatore comune. I romanzi citati si inseriscono all’interno di un percorso condiviso, volto alla rappresentazione, all’analisi e alla problematizzazione dello statuto dell’individuo nel mondo arabo. Oltre a rappresentare la condizione individuale all’interno di una società marcata da poteri forti, basati sull’appartenenza ad una collettività – sia essa partito politico, gruppo etnico, confessione religiosa, famiglia –, il romanzo siriano contemporaneo tenta di introdurre discorsi alternativi a quelli del potere. L’impegno dell’intellettuale si rivela quindi nella volontà di decostruire il discorso del potere – o meglio dei poteri – infiltrando narrazioni

individuali differenti, dando voce a soggetti considerati, per citare Spivak ([1988] 2002), *subaltern subjects*, marginalizzati dalla Storia e privati della possibilità di esprimersi direttamente.

È il caso di *Šibh al-ǧazīra al-ʻarabiyya* (2012) – che si è scelto in questa sede come esempio rappresentativo di questa narrativa – romanzo in cui Salwā al-Naʻīmī dà voce all'esperienza particolare di una donna siriana esiliata in Francia. La protagonista narra in prima persona il percorso che l'ha condotta alla scelta di lasciare la propria patria – la Siria – a favore della Francia. I concetti di nazione, appartenenza, e identità sono al centro di una problematizzazione che percorre integralmente l'opera. Attraverso la narrazione del percorso identitario della protagonista, al-Naʻīmī si riferisce in realtà al percorso identitario arabo, la cui traccia è presente nel titolo dell'opera, traducibile come «Penisola araba».

Salwā al-Naʻīmī è nata a Damasco da madre cristiana greco-ortodossa, convertitasi al cattolicesimo, e da padre ismailita.[4] Dopo essersi laureata in lingua e letteratura araba, si è trasferita a Parigi dove vive tuttora. Nella capitale francese ha studiato filosofia islamica alla Sorbonne e teatro all'Institut des Études théâtrales. È giornalista culturale: scrive su teatro, cinema e letteratura per la stampa araba. Per un periodo ha curato lo spazio dedicato alle interviste sulla rivista *al-Karmel*. Ha collaborato come giornalista culturale anche per riviste francesi e attualmente lavora presso l'Institut du Monde Arabe di Parigi, in qualità di addetto stampa. Al-Naʻīmī inizia la sua carriera letteraria come poetessa. La sua prima opera di narrativa è una raccolta di racconti, *Kitāb al-asrār* (Il libro dei segreti, 2010), pubblicata nel 1994 e riedita dopo il successo del suo primo romanzo, *Burhān al-ʻasal* (2007).

In occasione di un incontro avvenuto a Parigi nel maggio 2011, circa due mesi dopo lo scoppio delle prime rivolte in Siria, al-Naʻīmī dichiara che nel suo ultimo romanzo, *Šibh al-ǧazīra al-ʻarabiyya*, – di cui stava terminando la stesura e che sarebbe uscito di lì a poco – aveva in qualche modo colto il fermento che avrebbe portato all'ondata delle Primavere arabe. In realtà, l'autrice iniziò a scrivere *Šibh al-ǧazīra al-ʻarabiyya* ben prima dello scoppio delle Primavere, tuttavia – come avremo modo di mostrare – decise di dedicare la parte conclusiva del suo romanzo proprio a questi accadimenti.

1 Un percorso identitario attraverso la rottura

Šibh al-ǧazīra al-ʻarabiyya è l'ultima opera di al-Naʻīmī, una lunga narrazione in prima persona in cui la protagonista ripercorre le tappe salienti della propria vita che l'hanno portata a lasciare la Siria, suo luogo d'origi-

4 Mi baso qui sull'intervista rilasciatami dall'autrice il 30 maggio 2011 a Parigi.

ne, per stabilirsi a Parigi. A cavallo tra romanzo e genere autobiografico, la narrazione è diretta esclusivamente da un narratore omodiegetico. I personaggi secondari non sono che delle comparse, funzionali alla rappresentazione delle esperienze della protagonista. Le loro voci appaiono a tratti all’interno della narrazione, tramite l’inserzione di brevi dialoghi, che tuttavia non costituiscono che delle brevi digressioni da quella che è la narrazione principale, portata avanti dalla protagonista. Come nel caso di *Burhān al-ʿasal*, la protagonista presenta numerose affinità con l’autrice: entrambe sono donne siriane che hanno scelto di abbandonare la propria patria di origine per stabilirsi in Francia; entrambe provengono da una famiglia interconfessionale. Il posizionamento dell’autrice che si colloca nel punto di contatto e di compenetrazione tra due luoghi – Francia e Siria – e due universi culturali, si proietta sul personaggio stesso. Ed è proprio il posizionamento *in-between* della protagonista di *Šibh al-ǧazīra al-ʿarabiyya* che permette all’autrice di decostruire i concetti di nazione, appartenenza e identità.

In questo romanzo il significante nazione viene allontanato dal significato di appartenenza ad una comunità nazionale e avvicinato a quello di posizionamento individuale. Attraverso la narrazione di una patria ormai lontana, il personaggio principale intraprende un percorso di ricerca della propria identità. Come avremo modo di mostrare, questo percorso di decostruzione-ricostruzione della propria storia personale, porterà la protagonista ad identificarsi – in quanto esiliata – con la radicale assenza di radici. Grazie al suo posizionamento all’incrocio di più culture, il concetto di nazione, elemento introdotto fin dall’inizio del romanzo, viene messo in discussione. La protagonista racconta (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 11):

أحاول أن أتهجى الأحرف الثلاثة الهاربة. أن أعيد تركيبَ شظاياها. أن أتعلّم الكلمة المنسيّة: وطن

> Cerco di scandire le tre lettere fuggenti. Di rimetterne in sesto i frammenti. Di apprendere la parola dimenticata: patria[5]

La nazione è affermata nella sua assenza. È una parola dimenticata, svincolata dalla memoria che rappresenta il nesso tra individuo e collettività. Il personaggio tenta il recupero del significante che, se associato al significato di appartenenza ad una collettività, non produce senso per il soggetto esiliato. Lo scardinamento del concetto di nazione dalla sua accezione collettiva e la sua successiva rivisitazione in chiave individuale si rivela a più livelli all’interno dell’opera.

La narrazione è gestita – per tutto il romanzo – da un narratore unico omodiegetico e la focalizzazione è interna e fissa: tutti gli avvenimenti sono

5 Tutte le traduzioni dall’arabo all’italiano sono a cura di chi scrive.

filtrati dalla coscienza e dalla percezione della protagonista-narratrice che afferma così, in modo totalizzante, la propria soggettività. La centralità dell'universo interiore del personaggio si rivela anche a livello di finzione: il tempo della narrazione è interamente gestito dal suo io. La linearità temporale viene frantumata in una serie di narrazioni secondarie che generano continue intersezioni e sovrapposizioni tra presente e passato. I ricordi si intrecciano alla narrazione del presente e l'elemento che stabilisce una connessione tra le varie storie è la logica personale del personaggio che si lascia guidare dalla memoria.

La contrapposizione tra storia personale e Storia è il risultato di una scelta consapevole che la protagonista esplicita nell'incipit del romanzo (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 13):

> وُلدت من حكايتين. وُلدت على خطّ التماس بين حكايتين. وُلدت من حكايتين. وُلدت من روايتين مختلفتين للتاريخ صغيراً وكبيراً، وعرفت منذ البداية أن الحكاية هي وجهة نظر

> Sono nata da due storie. Sono nata sulla linea di contatto tra due storie. Sono nata da due storie. Sono nata da due narrazioni diverse dalla storia con la esse minuscola e con la esse maiuscola e ho saputo fin dall'inizio che la storia è un punto di vista.

La narratrice introduce nel testo più significanti che esprimono in arabo i diversi significati corrispondenti all'italiano «storia». La *ḥikāya*, termine antico che nel corso del tempo ha ricoperto numerosi significati,[6] si ricollega qui a quello di «storia» nel senso di «racconto». La *riwāya*, significante che può essere tradotto con il termine «versione» e che in epoca moderna viene chiamato ad identificare il genere del romanzo, può essere qui considerato nel significato di «narrazione».[7] Il passaggio si chiude con la citazione del lemma *tārīḫ* che si riferisce alla Storia ufficiale. La protagonista identifica la propria storia – addirittura la propria origine – ai significanti *ḥikāya* e *riwāya*, utilizzati per scardinare l'idea di una Storia (*tārīḫ*) all'interno della quale il singolo individuo possa riconoscersi. La storia individuale diventa un strumento per decostruire la Storia nella sua accezione di unica grande narrazione collettiva. Il tema dell'appartenenza – o meglio della non-appartenenza – alla Storia viene ripreso più volte all'interno del romanzo e compare anche nel titolo di due capitoli: «Il mio corpo è privato della sua storia» (al-Naʿīmī 2012, pp. 53, 137).

La protagonista rifiuta di identificarsi attraverso l'appartenenza ad una confessione religiosa. L'ironia che pervade la narrazione viene usata per stabilire una distanza tra il punto di vista del singolo e quello comunitario.

6 Per quanto riguarda l'evoluzione del significato del termine si rimanda a Pellat 1995.

7 Per quanto riguarda l'evoluzione del significato del termine si rimanda a Leder 1995.

Viene derisa la pratica di dare nomi propri per affermare l’appartenenza del bambino ad una confessione religiosa, come nel caso dei genitori della protagonista (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 18): i membri della famiglia materna, cristiana, portano nomi francesi, per dimostrare la propria non-appartenenza alla tradizione islamica; nella famiglia paterna, musulmana, la scelta ricade su nomi di personaggi importanti per la tradizione islamica. Per la protagonista, dunque, il rifiuto dei nomi materno e paterno rappresenta la rottura del legame simbolico con la famiglia.

Per intraprendere il percorso alla riscoperta della propria identità, la protagonista passa dunque attraverso una serie di cesure. Le perdite che ne derivano vengono mano a mano rielaborate e permettono la creazione dello spazio necessario all’espansione individuale. Nel capitolo che segue a quello dedicato alla morte della madre (al-Naʿīmī 2012, pp. 21-23) – morte simbolica più che carnale – la protagonista narra delle proprie vicende erotiche con diversi amanti. La perdita della madre – simbolo del legame con la famiglia, ma anche con la Storia e con la confessione – lascia un vuoto che permette al desiderio individuale di espandersi.

Un’altra fondamentale rottura attraverso la quale la protagonista deve passare per poter continuare il proprio percorso di soggettivazione è quella con il partito politico al potere: il Baʿṯ. Si tratta della scelta cruciale che la costringe a lasciare la Siria a favore della Francia: senza affiliazione al partito le risulta impossibile trovare lavoro in patria. La partenza per la Francia segna uno spartiacque tra un prima e un dopo, le cui conseguenze vengono così rappresentate (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 29):

تصغين إلى نداء غامض وتتركين كل شيء وراءك وترحلين؟ تتركين وراءك الوظائف والمنح والبعثات والأحزاب والحقوق والوساطات وسجلات الأسماء والخطوات المتسارعة والتنازلات والتاريخ والجغرافيا وترحلين

> Ascoltare un confuso richiamo, lasciare ogni cosa dietro di sé e partire? Lasciare dietro di sé gli impieghi, le borse di studio, le missioni, i partiti, i diritti, le raccomandazioni, le liste di nomi, i passi affrettati, le concessioni, la Storia e la geografia e partire.

Dopo un periodo di incertezza, la protagonista decide di rispondere al «confuso richiamo» e partire. Ed è paradossalmente proprio la partenza che innesca il procedimento di analisi del significato di patria e del tentativo di ripristino di un legame con essa. La separazione dalla patria permette di allontanarsi non solo dalla dittatura del partito, ma anche dalle pressioni del gruppo, rappresentato principalmente dalla famiglia e dalla confessione. La dolorosa liberazione da questi legami consente alla protagonista di affermarsi in quanto individuo, nella propria diversità. Grazie all’allontanamento, riesce a ristabilire un legame con la patria, tutelata da ogni fonte di oppressione, come viene enunciato nel passaggio che segue (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 43):

> كان عليّ أن أرحل لأكون الغريبة. لأصل إلى هذه الغواية المعلنة التي كانت وحدها تستطيع أن تعيد ربطي بهناك. أنا من هناك. الآن وأنا هنا فقط يمكنني أن أكون من هناك
>
> Dovevo andarmene per diventare la straniera. Per arrivare a quel desiderio manifesto che era il solo a poter ripristinare il mio legame con laggiù. Io sono di laggiù. Ora che sono qui, posso essere di laggiù.

La condizione di *ġarība* (straniera) della protagonista rappresenta la presa di distanza dell’esiliato dalla propria patria: distanza che permette la risignificazione del concetto stesso di appartenenza. È proprio il fatto di trovarsi in un luogo lontano che permette all’esiliato di adottare uno sguardo da straniero. In arabo il termine *ġarīb* non significa esclusivamente «straniero», ma anche «strano», «esotico». Dalla stessa radice deriva inoltre il termine *ġurba* (esilio, allontanamento dalla madrepatria). La condizione di esilio della protagonista non la porta solo a riscoprire la propria patria adottando uno sguardo particolare – da una posizione di straniamento (sempre dalla stessa radice, *iġtirāb*) – ma le consente anche di assumere uno sguardo particolare su di sé, diventando straniera ai propri occhi.

La condizione di estraneità e straniamento caratterizza l’esistenza della protagonista fin dall’infanzia e si manifesta, a livello linguistico, in una sorta di afasia: «Mi chiamavano la muta» (al-Na‘īmī 2012, p. 35), dice di sé. Continua poi a narrare della balbuzie (*al-laǧlaǧa*) che la coglieva quando era piccola. L’afasia e la balbuzie rappresentano l’incapacità della protagonista di comunicare con gli altri membri della comunità e la conseguente sua estraneità dalla comunità dei parlanti. Il linguaggio è dunque posto al centro di una problematizzazione in quanto istituzione sociale di costituzione del soggetto. De Saussure (p. 136) sostiene che «non vi sono idee prestabilite, e niente è distinto prima dell’apparizione della lingua» nel senso che l’uomo organizza e conosce la realtà, nonché il proprio universo interiore, attraverso il linguaggio, il quale svolge una funzione articolatoria sul mondo. Braidotti (2002, p. 79) riprende questo concetto, mettendo in rilievo che è proprio l’essere inscritto nel linguaggio che rende il soggetto tale, ovvero un ‘io’ dotato di parola, un’entità socializzata. Non può esserci soggettività al di fuori del linguaggio. Parafrasando il pensiero di Lacan, Bottiroli (2006, p. 267) mette inoltre in rilievo come:

> L’altro con la minuscola è il simile: è altro perché costituisce l’estremità nel rapporto che il soggetto stabilisce con un’immagine che lo duplica, con la duplice possibilità di confermarlo o di aggredirlo. Invece l’Altro con la maiuscola è il Simbolico, e rappresenta il luogo dei significanti, il linguaggio come istituzione sociale. […]
> Al soggetto si chiede dunque di accedere al luogo dell’Altro, di lasciarsi alienare da un’alienazione in cui rischia di smarrirsi, ma che gli offrirà gli strumenti necessari per avviare la ricerca di sé.

Da mezzo di relazione con l'altro, il linguaggio dell'esiliato si fa mezzo di cesura dall'altro, che non viene riconosciuto come proprio simile. Ecco quindi che siamo in presenza di una delle tante rotture che scandiscono il percorso di soggettivazione della protagonista. In realtà, vedremo successivamente che il legame con il linguaggio viene ripristinato attraverso la scelta di al-Naʻīmī, di narrare il percorso identitario della protagonista in arabo. Riprenderemo questo discorso più avanti.

Tra le varie rotture, si annovera anche quella con la tradizione letteraria araba, argomento già al centro del precedente romanzo di al-Naʻīmī, *Burhān al-ʻasal*. Anche se in *Šibh al-ğazīra al-ʻarabiyya* questo tema non è in primo piano, il rimando alla letteratura classica svolge un ruolo significativo. La protagonista riprende il genere della *riḥla*[8] (resoconto di viaggio), riferendosi in particolare ad Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, il grande viaggiatore arabo del XIV secolo, e ai viaggi meravigliosi di Sindbād il marinaio (al-Naʻīmī 2012, pp. 39, 72). Non si tratta tuttavia della volontà di affermare la filiazione da una certa tradizione letteraria, ma piuttosto della presa di distanza da quest'ultima. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa e Sindbād sono viaggiatori che rappresentano la patria lontana attraverso la lente della nostalgia. Il sogno del ritorno è ciò che li accompagna incessantemente nelle loro peregrinazioni. Ed è proprio il desiderio del ritorno ad essere risolutamente respinto dalla protagonista di *Šibh al-ğazīra al-ʻarabiyya* che istituisce al suo posto «il diritto al non ritorno» (al-Naʻīmī 2012, p. 72). Il motivo classico del viaggio viene stravolto per essere trasformato in un allontanamento definitivo dalla patria, allontanamento che, come già messo in luce, è proprio ciò che permette di ristabilire il legame con la patria stessa. Il rifiuto della nostalgia in quanto moto verso il passato, sentimento che a detta della protagonista è proprio dell'attitudine di Ibn Baṭṭūṭa e Sindbād, è motivato dalla necessità di guardare avanti, di protendersi verso un futuro che riserva all'esiliato la possibilità di incarnare una nuova identità.

Il motivo del viaggio viene successivamente ripreso e stabilito come marca costitutiva dell'esiliato. La narratrice afferma (al-Naʻīmī 2012, p. 115):

مِقياس فسحة المستقبل هو الرغبة بشرط أن تكون متجدّدة متنقّلة مترحلة كقوافل البدو. ليست هناك رغبة ثابتة مستقرة تسكن بيتاً وتدفع إيصالات الماء والكهرباء. الرغبة رحّالة

> L'unità di misura dell'ampiezza del futuro è il desiderio, a condizione che questo sia rinnovato, itinerante, migrante come le carovane beduine. Non esiste un desiderio stabile, sedentario, che abita una casa e paga le bollette dell'acqua e dell'elettricità.

L'impossibilità, per la protagonista, di restare in patria determina una

8 Per quanto riguarda l'evoluzione del significato del termine rimando a Netton 1986.

rottura con il passato, motivata dalla necessità di guardare avanti, verso un futuro il cui motore è il desiderio. Questo desiderio incarna le caratteristiche dell’esiliato stesso, essendo «itinerante» e «migrante». Poco più avanti, nel testo, l’autrice lo definisce ancor più esplicitamente come *raḥḥāla* termine che comunemente si traduce con «viaggiatore», ma che qui è utilizzato nell’accezione di «nomade» (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 115). Ancora una volta è chiaro come l’allontanamento dalla patria – e da un passato di repressione – permetta all’individuo di intraprendere un processo di soggettivazione e di accedere al futuro.

La patria è associata alla morte. Nel capitolo intitolato «Non ho una tomba?» (pp. 47-51), la protagonista riporta la conversazione con un ufficiale dei servizi segreti siriani che la minaccia (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 47):

في النهاية ستعودون جميعاً [...]
لا يمكن للأنسان أن يعيش من دون وطن [...]
ليس لكم إلا هذا الوطن

Alla fine tornerete tutti. [...] L’uomo non può vivere senza patria. [...] Avete soltanto questa di patria.

La protagonista viene assimilata al gruppo dei Siriani in esilio. Il ‘voi’ indirizzatole dall’ufficiale la colloca improvvisamente all’interno di una logica di gruppo che non le appartiene affatto. Il suo tratto costitutivo è infatti il radicale rifiuto di ogni forma di appartenenza, rifiuto che consente l’apertura dell’identità al molteplice. Ecco perché questo personaggio può essere considerato affine al «soggetto nomade» di Braidotti (2002), teorizzato per rispondere al problema identitario in un’epoca, come quella attuale, in cui l’individuo è calato in una dimensione globalizzata. La rapida e incessante circolazione degli individui determina scambio, contatto e incrocio tra realtà socio-culturali profondamente diverse. Tutto ciò porta necessariamente ad una profonda messa in discussione dei concetti di identità ed appartenenza. Il contatto con la diversità richiede di riformulare l’identità del soggetto, marcata all’origine dalla compresenza di più universi culturali. Il soggetto nomade è caratterizzato dal cambiamento e dalla metamorfosi. È il soggetto il cui corpo diventa una superficie sulla quale si incontrano variabile sociale, fisica e simbolica. È il soggetto che non si identifica tramite l’appartenenza ad un gruppo, ad un’etnia, ad una nazione. La sua identità è correlata all’idea di una cittadinanza flessibile, temporanea, provvisoria, che separa variabili quali l’origine etnica, dalla nazionalità e dalla cittadinanza. In questo modo il soggetto può identificarsi in una molteplicità di appartenenze (Braidotti 2002).

In *Šibh al-ǧazīra al-ʿarabiyya*, alla patria associata alla morte – la protagonista si chiede anche: «La patria è una tomba?» (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 47) – fa eco il desiderio associato al movimento perpetuo del nomade.

Stabilità in una patria che reprime corrisponde a morte, mentre movimento e rinnovamento corrispondono al desiderio, che consente al soggetto di proiettarsi verso il futuro. Così la protagonista rinuncia alla patria e rinuncia alla tomba (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 48): «Non ho una patria. Non ho una tomba».

La scelta di recidere i legami che ostacolano il libero sviluppo individuale matura nella protagonista già in età infantile (al-Naʿīmī 2012, pp. 50-51):

صغيرة عاهدت نفسي أن أعيش ما أريد بعيداً عمّا هو مرسوم لي. كنت أفضّل أن ينقلب قطاري على أن يمشي على السكة الحديدية التي يمكن أن يرسمها الآخرون. لا المجتمع ولا الطبقة ولا العائلة ولا الحزب ولا.. ولا.. حياتي لي ومساري لي حتى لحظة النهاية

> Da piccola mi sono ripromessa di vivere ciò che volevo lontano da ciò che era stato stabilito per me. Preferivo che il mio treno deragliasse piuttosto che marciasse sul binario tracciato dagli altri. Che si trattasse della società, della classe sociale, della famiglia, del partito, del…, del… La vita è mia e il percorso è mio, fino alla fine.

La protagonista afferma la propria libertà individuale in modo categorico. La rottura con qualsiasi legame e affiliazione è esplicitamente rivendicata. Gli 'altri' vengono identificati con la società, la classe sociale, la famiglia e il partito. È significativo inoltre che il capitolo all'interno del quale si trova il passaggio sopra citato abbia come titolo «W*aḥda, ḥurriya*» (Unità, libertà) (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 49) che riprende i primi due termini del noto slogan del Baʿṯ 'W*aḥda, ḥurriya, ištirākiyya*' (Unità, libertà, socialismo), omettendone però il terzo (socialismo). L'obliterazione del terzo significante, l'unico dello slogan a rimandare esplicitamente all'affiliazione all'ideologia socialista, strumentalizzata dal regime degli al-Asad per reprimere ed imporre la propria dittatura, è ciò che permette l'affermarsi dell'autentico significato dei due significanti che precedono. Affrancati dal termine *ištirākiyya* (socialismo), *waḥda* e *ḥurriya* (unità e libertà) recuperano il loro significato, prima deformato e strumentalizzato dal regime.

Tramite la rottura del legame con il partito, la classe sociale, la confessione religiosa, la società e la famiglia, attuata dalla protagonista, il discorso sulla patria e sull'appartenenza viene svincolato da ogni volontà di rappresentare e di dare voce e potere ad un gruppo a discapito di altri. Pur assumendo un posizionamento comune a molti altri, la protagonista si concentra sulla propria condizione che, attraverso le sue parole, è rappresentata come unica e peculiare. Ma è proprio l'insistenza sull'individualità e l'unicità che permette la decostruzione e la profonda messa in discussione dei concetti stessi di patria e di appartenenza.

2 La lingua come forma di appartenenza

L’unica forma di appartenenza che non viene rinnegata dalla protagonista – e dall’autrice – è quella alla lingua araba. Questo legame con la lingua riveste un valore significativo che viene diffusamente esplorato da al-Naʿīmī nel suo precedente romanzo, *Burhān al-ʿasal*. La lingua è l’elemento che permette alla protagonista di intraprendere un secondo percorso di formazione attraverso la sperimentazione del piacere. Questo percorso viene attivato dalla lettura di testi erotici della letteratura araba classica: l’autrice cita numerosi passaggi da testi di autori che datano dal IX al XVI secolo. Il personaggio si appropria della lingua degli Antichi, rinnovandola e risignificandola in chiave individuale. Il ripristino di un legame con il passato, nello specifico rappresentato dal patrimonio letterario arabo classico, permette all’individuo esiliato – ricordiamo che anche all’interno di questo romanzo la protagonista è una donna siriana residente in Francia – di intraprendere un processo di soggettivazione segnato dal successo, in quanto marcato dal trionfo del desiderio.

In *Šibh al-ǧazīra al-ʿarabiyya*, al-Naʿīmī sceglie di parlare dell’esilio – da una posizione di esilio – in lingua araba. Questa non è una scelta insignificante. La situazione dell’autrice non può essere assimilata a quella di altri intellettuali siriani – come ad esempio le scrittrici Samar Yazbik e Rūzā Yāsīn Ḥasan – emigrate in Europa di recente, in seguito agli sconvolgimenti del contesto politico e sociale siriano che hanno visto il loro inizio nel mese di marzo 2011. Al-Naʿīmī emigra molto prima, padroneggia perfettamente la lingua francese, è integrata all’interno della società francese e ricopre una posizione lavorativa prestigiosa. La scelta di esprimersi, nella sua produzione letteraria, in arabo rappresenta la volontà di rivolgersi ad una precisa comunità di parlanti e di stabilire un legame con essa. Attraverso la scrittura, al-Naʿīmī afferma la propria identità di donna araba. Dall’altro lato, questa stessa lingua è il mezzo che le permette di mettere in discussione le proprie origini e la propria cultura.

La protagonista di *Šibh al-ǧazīra al-ʿarabiyya*, lontana dalla propria terra, dopo essere passata attraverso numerose rotture, sceglie di narrare la nazione in arabo. Questa lingua diventa il simbolico di espressione dell’esiliato. Il simbolico che lo pone in relazione con la comunità di parlanti arabo. Ecco quindi che la rottura non si rivela radicale: il legame linguistico permane. Ed è proprio il tema dell’identità araba ad essere un altro elemento chiave del romanzo, direttamente correlato ai temi di nazione, esilio e appartenenza.

La nazione, all’interno dell’opera, compare solo attraverso i ricordi della protagonista. Si tratta dunque di una nazione immaginata, narrata, rappresentata dalle parole del personaggio, che perde la propria fisicità, l’identificazione con una terra delimitata da confini. Come la nazione non è luogo fisico ma un concetto, una narrazione condivisa da una comunità,

così la nazione dell'esiliato perde la connotazione fisica per farsi simbolica, narrata. La protagonista dice (al-Na'īmī 2012, p. 63):

أبني لنفسي بلاداً جديدة أنا أحقّ الناس بها من غيري. أبنيها على مقاسي. على مقاس ابتعادي. أبنيها بالكلمات. كل ما أملك

> Mi costruisco un nuovo paese a cui ho diritto più degli altri. Lo costruisco secondo il mio criterio. Secondo la misura della mia lontananza. Lo costruisco con le parole. Tutto ciò che possiedo.

La perdita del legame fisico con la nazione viene rielaborata attraverso il linguaggio. La nuova patria è fatta di parole, quelle della protagonista, diverse da quelle della Storia ufficiale. La narrazione della nuova patria immaginaria avviene in arabo.

Se la protagonista afferma a più riprese di non trovare il proprio posizionamento (al-Na'īmī 2012, p. 142) o di non avere, come il soggetto nomade, un unico posizionamento – «Ogni luogo è il mio luogo» (al-Na'īmī 2012, p. 143) – la sua identità di donna araba non viene rinnegata. È inequivocabile il rifiuto di identificarsi con la Siria del Ba'ṯ, con la confessione religiosa e perfino con la famiglia, ma l'identità araba non viene respinta, ma affermata tramite la lingua.

L'identità del personaggio è fondata, da un lato, sulle differenze individuali, la cui importanza è rivendicata dalla protagonista stessa (al-Na'īmī 2012, p. 153); dall'altro lato è legata alla comunità dal simbolico della lingua, unico autentico mezzo di relazione. Ma il concetto di identità araba viene scorporato dalla componente normativa di assimilazione al gruppo. Attraverso la narrazione della propria esperienza, la protagonista risignifica il concetto stesso di identità che dall'idea di omologazione ad una comunità – rappresentante la norma – si trasforma nell'affermazione della differenza. La differenza individuale, affermata attraverso la liberazione da tutte le catene, permette al soggetto nomade di guardare avanti. A questo proposito la protagonista dice di sé (al-Na'īmī 2012, p. 125):

لم أكن أستطيع أن أتابع الحياة من دون رغبتي المستمرة في الرحيل، في الابتعاد. أقنع نفسي أنه لا يمكنني أن ألتصق بمكاني أكثر من مياه جدول منحدر. أقنع نفسي أنني أقوى من أي قيد. أقنع نفسي

> Non avrei potuto continuare a vivere senza il mio incessante desiderio di partire, di allontanarmi. Mi persuado di non potermi attaccare ad un posto più di quanto non facciano le acque di una cascata. Mi persuado di essere più forte di ogni catena. Mi persuado.

L'assenza di posizionamento dell'esiliato è una condizione dolorosa, faticosamente assunta dalla protagonista. Tuttavia si tratta della condizione necessaria all'assunzione di un'identità libera e liberata. A questo propo-

sito la protagonista utilizza la metafora dell'amputazione per descrivere la propria assenza di posizionamento (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 97):

أعيش حياتي وكأنني مقطوعة من شجرة؟
الآفاق مفتوحة أمامي. لا ضغط ولا مقاومة لهذا الضغط. لا قمع لا مقاومة لهذا القمع

> Vivo la mia vita come se fossi amputata da un albero? Gli orizzonti sono aperti davanti a me. Non c'è alcuna pressione e nemmeno la resistenza a questa pressione. Non c'è alcuna repressione e nemmeno la resistenza a questa repressione.

L'amputazione necessaria e dolorosa dell'esiliato gli consente di non restare bloccato nel passato e di rivolgersi al futuro, rappresentato qui dagli orizzonti aperti. La protagonista arriva addirittura a parlare di «desiderio di amputazione» (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 138):

عيب عليّ أن أجاهر برغبتي في البتر، برغبتي في المضيّ إلى الأمام، أبعد، أبعد. خلسةً كنت أربّي ابتعادي، أجذّره، أنمّيه. أكره الحنين وأكره الوقوف على الأطلال

> Che lo scandalo sia su di me, che professo il mio desiderio di amputazione! Il mio desiderio di andare avanti, più lontano, più lontano. Di nascosto, allevo il mio allontanamento, lo radico, lo faccio crescere. Detesto la nostalgia e detesto la sosta presso le tracce [dell'accampamento, NdT].

L'identità della protagonista viene, nel passaggio sopra citato, legata a quella araba tramite il rimando alle *aṭlāl*, le tracce dell'accampamento dell'amata presso le quali piange il poeta della *Ǧāhiliyya*. L'avversione provata dal personaggio per uno specifico aspetto di questa produzione poetica non vuole essere un giudizio di valore. Il rimando alla *qaṣīda* preislamica – presente anche nel titolo di un altro capitolo in cui l'autrice cita il primo celebre emistichio della *muʿallaqa* di Imrū'-l-Qays, «Fermatevi e piangiamo» (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 81) – viene utilizzato per rappresentare metaforicamente il rifiuto del sentimento nostalgico di attaccamento alla patria e alla Storia. La protagonista rimanda alla possibilità che – non solo per se stessa ma anche per il mondo arabo – l'epoca della nostalgia, dei compianti e dei lamenti per un passato perduto sia finita e che quindi una nuova epoca possa finalmente avere inizio.

Negli ultimi due capitoli del romanzo il tema dell'identità dell'esiliato viene direttamente connesso a quello dell'identità araba. Nel penultimo capitolo, la protagonista è in aereo e sta sorvolando il Mediterraneo. Durante il viaggio ripercorre mentalmente le diverse rotture – con il passato, con la famiglia, con la Storia, con la confessione, con il partito, con la nazione – che si sono rivelate necessarie alla sua affermazione in quanto

individuo. Si sofferma sull’importanza di aver narrato, quindi rappresentato linguisticamente, il suo cammino di esiliata.

Il potere della parola viene inequivocabilmente affermato. Potere non solo di narrare, rappresentare, descrivere, ma soprattutto di performare la realtà. La protagonista è consapevole del potere della sua parola e della possibilità di creare, attraverso di essa, la propria storia (al-Naʿīmī 2012, p. 159):

ما لم يكتب يُعش. ما لم يكتب لم يكن. لا تصير الحكاية حكاية إلا عندما نحكيها؟ أتساءل كيف تغيرت الحكاية وأفهم أنها صارت حكايتي. أنا من يكتب. أنا من يعيش. أنا من يحكي

> Ciò che non è stato scritto non è stato vissuto. Ciò che non è stato scritto non è esistito. La storia diventa tale solo se la si racconta? Mi domando come la storia sia cambiata e capisco che è diventata mia. Sono io quella che scrive. Sono io quella che vive. Sono io quella che racconta.

Il processo di soggettivazione del personaggio è totalizzante: comprende referente, simbolico e narrazione. La protagonista vive, racconta e scrive. Tramite l’affermazione della propria identità di esiliata e della non-appartenenza, avviene il recupero della lingua, principale istituzione sociale e di soggettivazione. La protagonista contraddice il concetto di appartenenza in quanto forma di omologazione al gruppo: rifiuta l’appartenenza ad una patria, se essa si identifica con la Siria del Baʿṯ; rifiuta la religione, se comporta l’appartenenza ad una confessione; rifiuta di lasciarsi narrare dalla Storia, il cui discorso cancellerebbe la sua storia personale. L’unica forma di appartenenza ad essere associata alla sua identità è quella alla lingua araba.

Le diverse rotture attraversate e narrate dalla protagonista, le permettono di affermarsi nella propria identità di donna araba, che si esprime in arabo, liberata dalla logica repressiva delle diverse forme di omologazione al gruppo. La lingua araba diventa così il principale mezzo di soggettivazione dell’esiliato. Il rifiuto dell’appartenenza alla famiglia, al partito e alla nazione, segnata dalla necessità di rinunciare alla differenza individuale per essere accettati e riconosciuti al gruppo apre la possibilità di affermare una nuova forma di appartenenza ‘liberata’. La lingua è il mezzo che permette l’avverarsi di questo processo di affermazione individuale e di condividerlo con la comunità dei parlanti. In questo modo il processo di soggettivazione del personaggio non fluttua all’interno di un vuoto relazionale, ma si inscrive in un percorso più ampio, che coinvolge gli individui che si sentono di appartenere alla comunità dei parlanti, suggerendo nuove possibili modalità di appartenenza ed identificazione.

3 Conclusione

La centralità della questione dell'identità araba si manifesta esplicitamente nell'ultimo capitolo intitolato: «Arab is beautiful» (al-Na'īmī 2012, p. 161). La protagonista vi narra dello scoppio delle Primavere arabe, identificate come il preludio ad una nuova fase storica per il mondo arabo: «Un'altra storia è iniziata» (al-Na'īmī 2012, p. 161), dice. «Arab is beautiful»: l'affermazione contenuta nel titolo è in inglese nella versione originale del romanzo. La scelta è significativa. L'affermazione di un'identità araba «bella» – proprio perché liberata da ogni componente repressiva, a livello di finzione grazie al percorso della protagonista e a livello di referente grazie all'arrivo delle Primavere arabe, mosse da uno spirito di liberazione – avviene in un'altra lingua. Un paradosso? Forse si tratta piuttosto della scelta di etichettare una nuova fase storica per il mondo arabo ricorrendo ad una lingua, come l'inglese, che è la lingua utilizzata per comunicare nell'era della globalizzazione. In questo modo la protagonista ribadisce che la propria identità non è segnata dall'appartenenza ad un gruppo, ma da molteplici forme di appartenenza che collocano il soggetto nel punto di incontro tra più universi culturali.

Il fatto che il romanzo si concluda con un capitolo sulle Primavere arabe rappresenta la volontà dell'autrice di correlare il tema del riscatto individuale e dell'affermazione della differenza del soggetto, al tema della sollevazione della comunità contro l'oppressione e la violazione dei diritti. Queste due tematiche chiamano entrambe in causa il concetto di identità araba che risulta quindi essere inequivocabilmente al centro dell'opera. Del resto già nel titolo del romanzo, traducibile come «Penisola araba», si trova traccia della volontà dell'autrice di soffermarsi sul mondo arabo. L'ultimo capitolo, dedicato alle Primavere arabe, risulta centrale nell'economia del romanzo: il percorso identitario della protagonista – fin qui puramente individuale – acquisisce un valore metaforico, facendosi simbolo dell'inizio di un nuovo percorso identitario per il gruppo. Tra l'altro al-Na'īmī ha avuto recentemente modo di ribadire[9] la propria collocazione tra le fila di quegli intellettuali siriani che, nonostante i tragici sviluppi della rivoluzione siriana – che molti ormai non esitano a definire guerra civile – continuano a credere nella possibilità di un reale cambiamento in Siria. Continuano a credere cioè che tra le macerie della violenza e le strumentalizzazioni ideologico-religiose, risieda ancora la traccia della Primavera, nata da un movimento spontaneo e laico volto alla rivendicazione di diritti e libertà. Le prime manifestazioni avvenute in Siria nel mese di marzo 2011 erano infatti contrassegnate da slogan laici che re-

9 Mi riferisco alle dichiarazioni di al-Na'īmī in occasione dell'incontro a lei dedicato, nell'ambito del festival letterario internazionale Incroci di civiltà, tenutosi a Venezia, il 5 aprile 2014.

clamavano libertà e dignità per tutti i cittadini, indipendentemente dalle appartenenze religiose e etniche.

Ecco quindi che *Šibh al-ğazīra al-ʻarabiyya* si iscrive all’interno della tendenza della narrativa siriana contemporanea che pone al centro l’individuo, esplorandone l’universo interiore, raccontandone le più intime esperienze, senza censure, né retorica. Questi personaggi-individuo, che si distaccano nettamente dal personaggio-tipo del realismo socialista degli anni Cinquanta, rivendicano la propria differenza come pratica di resistenza all’omologazione ad una norma stabilita verticalmente e naturalizzata. L’impegno politico continua ad essere il perno di questa produzione narrativa in quanto solo il percorso di liberazione individuale può portare alla liberazione della società nel suo complesso.

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On the Era of Yazdegard III and the Cycles of the Iranian Solar Calendar

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Abstract The well-known Persian solar era (Yazdegardī era) presents some problems. It is believed to have started with the official rise to the throne of the last Sasanian sovereign Yazdegard III in 632 CE and it is characterized by the one-day backward motion of all dates of the relative calendar every four Julian years. I here analyze some Arabic and Persian sources of the Islamic age in order to establish the kind of cycle or cycles that the Iranian solar calendar was based upon. In this regard, I observe that, following the statement of an outstanding figure of astronomer of the 10th century CE, the first year of the Yazdegardī era should have fallen on the third year of a four-yearly cycle of one-day backward motion of that calendar, and not in the first one, as is taken for granted in the available conversion tables.

In this study I deal with a calendarical system I prefer to call Iranian calendar rather than Zoroastrian calendar, as is customary in the scholarly tradition. Indeed, the latter definition tends to obscure the great socio-cultural relevance of this phenomenon. 'Iranian calendar' is a better match for the definitions found in the only ancient sources that speak extensively about it, that is, the astronomical works of the Islamic age. In these texts the expression adopted is usually «the calendar of the Persians» (rather than «of the Magians», even though the Magians did use that same calendar and this fact was well known).[1] In other words, the object of my research consists of problems related to the Persian solar calendar and its era starting with the official rise to the throne of the last Sasanian sovereign Yazdegard (or Yazde-

1 On the Mandean calendar, the great Iranian scholar Hasan Taqizadeh (1937-1938, p. 358; Italian ed.: p. 150) wrote about: «The calendar among this people is just the Iranian calendar of the Sasanian age. Only the names of the months differ, being in Mandean. […] The Iranian calendar has not been preserved in its integrity in any part of the world and the calendar of the greater part of the Indian Parsees (the current Shāhinshāhī) shows a difference by one month from the calendar of the Sasanian age, due to an intercalation of one month which occured in the Islamic age. Even the calendar of the Iranian Zoroastrians and of the Indian Parsees of the Qadīmī current differs from the calendar of the Sasanian age, since the five epagomenal days are placed at the end of the year rather than at the end of the eighth month. Today the Mandean calendar is exactly the same as the calendar of the Sasanian age». On the whole matter, see now Panaino 2014; in disagreement with Taqizadeh, the Italian scholar states that the Mandean calendar «could have been identical to the Persian one or similar to it in its essential scheme [(30 × 12) + 5], but with some differences or local peculiarities» (Panaino 2014, p. 97).

gerd) III in 632 CE. This starting point is not to be doubted. Nonetheless, the structure of the Iranian solar calendar during the first centuries of the Islamic age is somehow problematic (see Panaino 2012, with bibliography).

The Yazdegardī calendar is based on vague solar years, that is, on years measuring three hundred and sixty five days each, *without* intercalation. In his *La Chronologie*, Venance Grumel (1958, p. 211) gives us a brief and clear description of it:

> que le nom de ce prince malhereux [i.e. Yazdegard III], le dernier de sa dynastie, soit attaché à une ère ne s'explique ni par un acte de son autorité, ni par sa personnalité, mais par le fait que les actes officiels étant toujours datés des années du souverain régnant, et Iezdegerd n'ayant pas eu de successeur, c'est son nom que l'on continua à employer après sa chute, sans doute par fidélité à la dynastie et comme expression du sentiment national. Le point de départ n'est pas pris du jour même de l'avènement de Iezdegerd, mais selon la coutume traditionelle de compter les années de règne à partir du début de l'année, Ier Ferverdin. L'ère de Iezdegerd commence ainsi au Ier Ferverdin correspondant [in that year] au 16 juin 632 ap. J.-C.

The Iranian year is made up of twelwe months of thirty days each plus an extra brief period, lasting five days, mostly called *andargāh* or *panja* in Persian. Around the beginning of the 11th century CE, the *andargāh* of the Iranian calendar was shifted from the end of the eighth month – i.e. from the position it occupied in the late Sasanian age and which it kept during the first Islamic age – to the end of the year, after the twelfth month.

All the dates of this kind of calendar move backwards of one day every four years with respect to the fixed seasonal point, due to the employ of the vague solar year and the lack of intercalation. In spite of the mobility of this kind of calendar and the fluid correspondence between Yazdegardī dates and fixed seasonal points, a relevant part of the Iranian tradition establishes an ideal coincidence between the first day of the first month of the year (i.e. 1 Farwardīn) and the 1° of Aries, the Spring equinox point. This implies the existence of a great intercalary cycle necessitating the insertion in the calendar of a thirteenth extra month every one hundred and twenty years.[2] According to François de Blois, this «idea» may have appeared in the Iranian milieu of the astronomical studies of the first Islamic age.[3] As a matter of fact, it was restored and intended as historical

2 This idea is frequently asserted in Arabic and Persian sources, with some differences in the number of years needed for carrying out the 'intercalation' (120 or 116). It is of interest to observe that al-Kharaqī indicates the year 500 Yazdegardī as the time in which an 'intercalation' was needed, just 124 years after the date of the 'intercalation' noticed by Kūshyār al-Jīlī; see below.

3 De Blois (1996, p. 50) states: «The *idea* of intercalation is, as we have seen, clearly ex-

by the pioneers of Iranian studies, starting with the explanation given by Thomas Hyde in his *Historia religionis veterum Persarum eorumque Magorum* (Oxford, 1700), and later by the well developped theory expressed by *Alfred von Gutschmid in his Über das iranische Jahr* (Leipzig, 1862), who hypothesized the side by side coexistence of two calendars: a civil one (what we know in its Islamic form as the Yazdegardī calendar) and a religious one, whose existence however is not proven. Such a fascinating theory is now outdated.

The Iranian calendar and its history are widely scrutinized by Arabic and Persian sources. Fortunately, these sources furnish us with interesting historical data mixed with various hypotheses regarding its presumed history. These data mostly concern the shape the Iranian calendar assumed during the Islamic age, that is, the Yazdegardī calendar. Her I would like to deal with two relevant issues: the starting point of the era of Yazdegard III, and the historical reckoning of the coincidence between the Spring equinox and 1 Farwardīn (i.e. the first day of the first month of the Iranian year).

The starting point of the Yazdegardī era is well established: 1 Farwardīn of the first year of the Yazdegardī era corresponds to 16 June 632 CE, the official date of the coronation of the last Sasanian emperor Yazdegard III (r. 632-652 CE). What I think to be relevant is the existence of an exception to the generally assumed correspondence between this date and the beginning of a four-yearly cycle of one-day backward motion of the Yazdegardī calendar. This four-yearly cycle is the peridod of time during which the correspondence between a date of the solar vague calendar and another date of a solar fixed calendar (like the Julian one) is assured and univocal. For instance, if on the first year of a four-yearly cycle 1 Farwardīn falls on 15 May, this correspondence will hold true for four years, and on the fifth year 1 Farwardīn will fall on 14 May, thus opening a new four-yearly cycle.

First of all, one must to highlight the importance that the coincidence of 1 Farwardīn and Spring Equinox still has in the Iranian tradition. This coincidence has been of notorious relevance from a ritual point of wiew for Zoroastrians. It was the moment when the Iranian New Year Day (Nawrūz) happened to reach its ideal position in concidence with the first degree of the Aries. According to two great astronomers of the 10-11th century CE, Kūshyār (Gōshyār) al-Jīlī and Abū al-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (al-Bērūnī, see below), at this time the five days of *andargāh* shifted to the end of the Iranian year, thus changing the internal schema of the year. Such a coincidence occurs theoretically every 1,440 or 1,461 year (i.e. on the basis of

pressed in a small number of passages in Zoroastrian religious writings compiled during the Islamic period; the *legend* that intercalation had ever actually been carried is not in fact spelt out in any extant Zoroastrian book, but only in the writings of Muslim authors of the tenth century and later». On this matter see also Panaino 1996 pp. 298-301; 2010, p. 161; 2014, p. 87 note 2, and p. 93.

the functioning of the Yazdegardī calendar). Some words need to be spent on this point, since there is a discrepancy of twenty-one years between the two numbers indicating the amount of years of the entire cycle.

The *Nawrūznāma* is a Persian *risāla* on the Iranian New Year Day composed between the 11th and 12th century CE, and attributed to the well-known Persian astronomer and mathematician ʿUmar al-Khayyām(ī). There are two extant manuscripts of this text and, while one of them is lacunous on the matter, the other speaks *apertis verbis* of a 'Great Cycle' (*dawr-i buzurg*) of the Iranian calendar, linking it directly with the institution of the Nawrūz, the festival of the New Year Day:

> The Nawrūz was instituted because the Sun has two cycles, the first determined by his return to the first degree of Aries every three hundred and sixty five days and one fourth of a day [...] and the other determined by his return every 1,461 years to the same degree at the very same moment and day when it started to move.[4]

Thus, according to this text, the Great Cycle of backward motion of the Iranian year lasts 1,461 years (indeed 365.25 × 4 = 1,461). However, we must pay due attention to the fact that the author of this work wrote in a period posterior to the reform of the Iranian calendar operated by Malikshāh al-Saljūqī between 1076 CE and 1079 CE, which introduced a new era – the Jalalian one – and a new calendar with periodical intercalations of the solar year. After this reform, the new and more common version of the Jalalian calendar had twelwe months of thirty days each plus the five (or sometimes six) days of *andargāh* at the end of the year.

At the time when the *Nawrūznāma* was composed, the five days of *andargāh* occurred regularly after the twelfth month, and for the author of this *risāla* this was a well known fact. Moreover, the measure of the solar year considered in the text is 365.25 days, and this may well explain why the author refers to a cycle of 1,461 years. Indeed, it is mathematically true that the backward motion (of one day every four years) of Nawrūz throughout a year assumed as 365.25 days long, entails a period of exactly 1,461 years (365.25 × 4 = 1,461).

However, we should keep in mind that the Yazdegardī year – i.e. the Ira-

4 I translate from the ms. of the *Nawrūznāma*, Add. 23568, f. 86b of British Museum Library, since the two passages are seriously lacunous in Ms. Cod. Or. 8° n. 2450, ff. 78b and 79b of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, on which is based the Mīnawī's edition of this text [Ḥakīmʿ Umar Khayyām (1933/1312 solar H.), *Nawrūznāma*. Ed. by Mīnawī, Mujtabā. Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Kāwa]. The transcription is as follows: «ammā sabab-i nihādan-i nawrūz ān būda ast ki čūn āftāb rā du dawr buwad yak-ī ān ki har sīṣad u shaṣt u panj rūz wa rubʿ az shabānarūz-ī ba-awwal daqīqa-yi ḥamal bāz āyad ān waqt rā nawrūz wa nawsāl khwānand wa dīgar ān ki har hazār u čahārṣad u šaṣt u yak sāl ba-hamān daqīqa bāz āyad ba-hamān waqt u rūz ki rafta būd».

nian calendrical year as it was before the Jalalian reform and as it is now in the Yazdegardī calendar – was based on solar vague year of 365 days each, without any fraction. Moreover, as already noticed by Hasan Taqizadeh (Taqizadeh 1937-1938, p. 117 note 249; Italian ed.: p. 256), the shift of five days from a month to another or from a certain point of the year to its end – during the elapse of the whole cycle – implies that the total number of days the Nawrūz moved throughout every four years in order to return to the starting seasonal point are 360 instead of 365. This implies a cycle lasting (360 × 4 =) 1,440 years.[5]

As a side note, I think that a complex mathematical elaboration focusing upon the Iranian calendar and its cycle of 1,440 years is traceable in the Qābūs' tower in Gurgan (Gonbad-e Kāvūs, Iran). On this monument nothing satisfying has ever been written regarding the significance of its star shape and the functions it had. The novelty of the Arabic inscriptions on the Qābūs' tower resides in featuring both an Islamic lunar date and the correspondent Iranian solar date, both indicating the year 1006 CE. I discussed the matter in a study in which I related the dates indicated in the inscriptions to the geometrical refinement of that extraordinary building, and its evident astronomical connection to the solar year (as a matter of fact, the tower features several solar references; see Cristoforetti forth.). This was due to the deliberate will of an Iranian prince, the Ziyarid ruler Qābūs ibn Wushmgīr known as *Shams al-maʿālī* (first r. 1 CE; Buwayhid occupation 981-997 CE; second r. 997-1012 CE), who was deeply tied to tradition and was also a skilled astronomer. It should be underlined that the solar date inscribed on the tower is the first epigraphical evidence of the adoption of the Iranian calendar in Islamic times. The hypotesis I propose is that the Ziyarid sovereign aimed at celebrating the end and renewal of the 'Great Year' of the Iranian calendar, and builded a tower fuctioning also as a solar watch marking the natural seasons.

We can observe something else on this matter. I believe that a possible trace of the Iranian 1,440-yearly cycle can be found in the commentary to the *Zīj* by Ulugh Bīg titled *Dastūr al-ʿamal wa taṣḥīḥ al-jadwal*, written in 1498-1499 CE by the Ottoman astronomer and mathematician Mīrīm Çelebī (d. 1525 CE), grandson of the teacher of Uluġ Bīg, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd Qāḍīzāda al-Rūmī. This author wrote

5 Cf. also Taqizadeh 1937-1938, p. 39, p. 117, p. 150 note 51 and note 249 (Italian ed.: p. 24, p. 66, p. 79 note 51 and note 249). Mentions of the great cycle of the Iranian calendar lasting 1440 years are in *Muntahā al-idrāk fī taqāsim al-aflāk* (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Or. 110 f. 93a) by ʿAbd al-Jabbār b. Muḥammad al-Ṭābitī al-Kharaqī (d. ca. 1106-7 CE) and *al-Tuḥfat al-shāhiyya fī-'l-hay'a* (London, British Museum Library, Ms. Add. 23393, ff. 151b-152a; Paris, Bibliothèque National, Fond Arabe 2516, f. 98b) by Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Shīrāzī (d. between 1310 and 1316 CE).

four centuries after the Jalalian reform of the Iranian calendar. As it was customary for any astronomer of that time, Mīrīm Çelebī also elaborated an intercalary cycle for the Jalalian calendar, but unlike several other famous astronomers, who elaborated intercalary cycles of 220, 268, and 300 years, Çelebī elaborated a much longer cycle lasting 1,440 years, with 349 leap years. This fact was astonishing for Taqizadeh, who observes: «It is unknown why Çelebī assumed as a basis for his measure of the fraction of the solar year the astronomical observations from the *Zīj-i īlkhānī,* disregarding the observations from Samarqand, even though he himself did comment the *Zīj-i īlkhānī* by Ulugh Bīg, and his grandfather collaborated with that soverain» (Taqizadeh 1937-1938, p. 173 note 335; Italian ed.: p. 301). In my opinion, all this is possibly due to the strength that the idea of a 1,440-yearly cycle generically connected to the Iranian calendar may have had on the Ottoman scholar.

Coming back to the coincidence between 1 Farwardīn and the Spring equinox, the oldest mention on this matter is a rather short text from the *Jāmiʿ zīj* by the Iranian astronomer Kūshyār ibn Labbān al-Jīlī (the book was written in Arabic at the beginning of the 11th century CE, a short time after 1 Farwardīn and 1° of Aries coincided):[6]

> When hundred and twenty years [after the time of Anūshīrvān] has passed, it was the end of the reign of the Persians, the disruption of their government, and [the beginning of] the domination of the Arabs over them. […] The five days [of *andargāh*] remained at the end of the month of Ābān [the 8th month] until the year three hundred and seventy five of the Yazdajird era, when the Sun entered Aries on the first day of the month of Farwardīn [the 1st month]. We have been informed that in Fārs and the those areas [near it], the five days were moved to the end of the month of Isfandārmudh [the 12th month] according to the ancient tradition.

Another record on the matter is available in another source, less known indeed, which appears to be useful in this regard. In the section on Persian chronology in the *Muntahā al-idrāk fī taqāsīm al-aflāk* by Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Thābitī al-Kharaqī,[7] there is a very clear passage

6 No complete edition of this work has ever been published. The Arabic passage and its German translation are available also in Ideler 1825-1826, p. 547 and p. 625. For the edition of the chapters on calendars, with an English translation and a summary of the whole work, see Bagheri 2008 (for the above quoted passage, see p. 79). For some important observations about it, see de Blois 1996, p. 52 notes 37, 38.

7 He was a Persian astronomer, geographer, and mathematician of the first half of the 12th century CE, writing in Arabic. His name probably refers to the village named Kharaq near Marw. For this reason, he is also called al- Marwazī. He composed the text in ca. 527 (1132-1133 CE). He died in Marw in 533 (1138-1139 CE).

concerning the year 500 Yazdegardī (beginning 12 Feb. 1131 CE, ending 11 Feb. 1132 CE):

> on the year three hundred and seventy five of the era of Yazdajird, when the Sun went to touch the spring equinox point at the the first day of Farwardīn-māh, we added the five days [of *andargāh*] to the last days of Isfandārmudh-māh [the 12th month]. The intercalation took place in the regions of Fars, while in the regions of ʿIraq and Khurasan [the five days] remained to the end of Ābān-māh [the 8th month] [...]. On Saturday, the 12th of the month of Rabīʿ al-thānī in the year [52]5, year 500 in the era of Yazdajird, [when the Sun[went to touch the spring equinox point] in the month of Urdībihisht it was time to apply the *kabīsa* again, and therefore we applied it by adding five days to the last days of the month of Farwardīn; and therefore its days numbered thirty-five.[8]

I have already discussed this passage and other material on the matter of the shift of the five epagomenal days in the Iranian calendar (Cristoforetti 2007, pp. 47-54). The dates mentioned in this text are 12 Rabīʿ al-thānī 525 Hijrī and 1 Urdībihisht 500 Yazdegardī, both corresponding to 14 March 1131 CE, date of the Spring equinox which regularly occurred at this date during the period 1112-1147 CE.

Leaving aside the historicity of the theory proposed by Muḥammad al-Kharaqī concerning the shift (in his words *kabīsa*)[9] of the 5 days of *andargāh* from the end of the year to the end of the first month and the general functioning of the Iranian calendar, in the *Muntahā al-idrāk* we have an account of the coincidence between the first day of an Iranian month (the second in this case, i.e. Urdībihisht) and the Spring equinox.

This statement agrees with Kūshyār’s passage. Such a momentous coincidence of Farwardīn with Aries is the only one in the Yazdegardī calendar. This is of extreme importance, since both texts say that in that age the five days of *andargāh* had been shifted to the end of the Iranian year,[10] deter-

8 Ms. Or. 110 of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, f. 93b: «ilā sana khamsa wa sabaʿīn wa thalathamiʾa min taʾrīkh Yazdajird fa-unhit al-shams ilā māss nuqṭat al-iʿtidāl al-rabīʿī awwal yawm min farwardīn-māh fa-alḥaqnā al-ayyām al-khamsa bi-akhir ayyām isfandārmudh-māh wa huwa al-makbūs bi-nawāḥī Fārs fa-mā bi-nawāḥī ʿIrāq wa Khurāsān baqiyat fī akhir ābān-māh [...] wa qadd ʿādat nawbat al-kabīsa <ilā farwardīn-māh> ilā urdībihisht māh yawm al-sabt al-thānī ʿashar min shahr rabīʿ al-akhir sana khamsa [wa ʿishrīn wa khamsamiʾa] sana khamsamiʾa min taʾrīkh Yazdajird fa-kabsanā farwardīn-māh wa alḥaqnā al-khamsa al-ayyām bi-akhir ayyāmihi fa-ṣārat ayyāmuhu khamsan wa thalathīn yawman».

9 On the meaning of the word *kabīsa* – too often translated as ‘intercalation’ with excessive ease – see Cristoforetti 2009.

10 The same information is available in Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī (2002/1422 H.), *al-Qānūn al-masʿūdī*. Ed. by al-Jundī, ʿAbd al-Karīm Sāmī. Vol I. Beirut: Dār

mining a change in the internal structure of the calendrical year.[11] At last, the Yazdegardī year corresponded to the ideal Iranian year (though for four years only). According to the above mentioned texts, such a propitious coincidence – the first one in the history of the Yazdegardī calendar – occurred in the year 375 Yazdegardī. Both texts speak of the passing of the Sun from Pisces into Aries in the first day of the first month of the Iranian year (1 Farwardīn).

Taking into consideration the relevance of the event from a calendrical point of view in relation with the Yazdegardī calendar, the occurrence of that Spring equinox in coincidence with the first day of the first Iranian month must have also determined the banner of a one-day backward motion of the Yazdegardī year with respect to the solar seasons (as already said, the proof of it consists in the shift of the five days of *andargāh* which occurred at that time). The implicit information that Kūshyār al-Jīlī and Muḥammad al-Kharaqī give us is that 1 Farwardīn moved from the 2° to the 1° of Aries (while during the preceding four years 1 Farwardīn coincided with the 2° of Aries), and that the Spring equinox coincided with the end of the Yazdegardī year. Indeed, the lack of any intercalary mechanism in this calendar based on the vague solar year implies the existence of four-yearly cycles of one-day backward motion of the calendrical year. In other words, the beginning of the year of the Yazdegardī calendar (1 Farwardīn, i.e. Nawrūz) came a day in advance every four years.

In consequence of this fact, the coincidence between 1 Farwardīn and 15 March (i.e. the date of the Spring equinox during the period 1000-1015 CE) noticed by both the astronomers should have interested the period from 1006 CE to 1009 CE.

Now, if we check the available conversion tables for the Yazdegardī calendar,[12] it can be seen that 1 Farwardīn coincided with 15 March just during the period 1004-1007 CE (in 1008 CE and 1009 CE it coincided with 14 March). Thus the coincidence between 1 Farwardīn and the Spring equinox occured in the third year of one of the four-yearly periods adopted in the conversion tables. This implies the existence of a discrepancy of two

al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, p. 129. But see de Blois (1996, p. 53 note 40) on the possible non effectiveness of the shift.

11 Several scholars have tried to identify the mind of this operation among the lot of prominent political men of that time. Taqizadeh 1937-1939, pp. 917-918, indicates Bahāʾ al-Dawla – likely in virtue of his military and political preminence. Bihrūz 1952-1953, p. 56 indicates the Saffarid ruler Khalaf ibn Aḥmad, but gives no explanation for this name. Bulsara 1953, p. 191, identifies in Qābūs ibn Wushmgīr the eluding policy-maker, but his position is flawed by too generical arguments, focussing on alleged Qābūs’ Sasanian ancestry.

12 Conversion tables are available in Patell (1866, pp. 123-182) until 2000 CE, Neugebauer (1937, pp. 395-404) and Wüstenfeld ([1854] 1961, p. 38). Nöldeke (1879, p. 436) elaborates a table of conversion valid for the Sasanian age, on the basis of the same four-yearly cycles adopted in the above mentioned tables.

years between the data detectable from Kūshyār's and al-Kharaqī's work and the conversion tables. As a matter of fact, all the available conversion tables start from 16 June 632 CE and consider the period 632-635 CE as the first four-yearly period of the Yazdegardī calendar. Consequently, if we think that the information traceable from the above-mentioned sources are correct, half of the correspondences fournished in the conversion tables is wrong. Therefore, the first day of the Yazdegardī era should have been 17 June 632 CE instead of 16! Needless to say, such a problem is relevant in order to establish the Iranian chronology, though a single statement (supposing a direct dependence of al-Kharaqī from Kūshyār) is not enough, especially if we consider that Kūshyār does not doubt the correspondence of the first day of the Yazdegardī era with 16 June 632 CE («the 16th of Ḥazīrān of the 943 of the era of Alexander» in his statement; see Ideler 1825-1826, p. 520). And yet, he could have been wrong in the reckon of the date of that momentous coincidence.

However, the modern chronologists pay attention to the account given by Kūshyār but from another point of view. For example, Neugebauer elaborated a table also for the reckoning of the Yazdegardī days (Neugebauer 1937, pp. 401-402). In this table, he indicates a double possibility of reckoning for days pertaining to the last four months of the year. The double possibility is due to the fact that, as already noticed, in a particular moment of the long history of the Yazdegardī calendar the five days of *andargāh* had been displaced from the end of the eighth month to the end of the year, and evidently this influenced the reckoning of the correspondences of days pertaining to the last four months of the year. In Neugebauer's table the date *post quem* which is necessary to take into account as the alternative reckoning, is the year 1006 CE for this is the year when the shift of the five days of the *andargāh* was decided.

The fact that this coincidence occurred in a third year of the four-yearly period 1129-1232 CE adopted in the conversion tables is extremely relevant for the issue I am discussing here. This allows us to observe that the four-yearly cycles of the historical Yazdegardī calendar detectable from Kūshyār's account – possibly confirmed by this last passage – do not coincide with those upon which the conversion tables are elaborated. Then, another question arises: why did these astronomers disregard such a problem?

As done by Kūshyār al-Jīlī (and Abū al-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī too), the astronomers registered accurately all the information on the calendrical systems available at the time. However, no uncertainty is expressed about the correspondence of the first day of the Yazdegardī era, unfailingly considered to be 16 June 632 CE. Why then Kūshyār al-Jīlī and al-Kharaqī refer the occurence of the momentous coincidence of 1 Farwardīn with the Spring equinox to the third year of the four-yearly period of the Yazdegardī calendar (namely 373-376 = 1004-1007 CE)?

If it is difficult to find a satisfactory answer to such a question on a calen-

drical level, an investigation in wider areas, i.e. the political and cultural domain, can help us in this regard.

As I said, it is my opinion that the tower of Qābūs can be interpreted as an architectural testimony of the ideal Iranian calendar at the time of the momentous return of the Nawrūz at the Spring equinox, with the renewal of the Great Year of the Persians, with relevant symbolical and propagandistic meanings. The renewed occurence of the Nawrūz (1 Farwardīn) of the solar vague calendar in its ideal position at the 1° of Aries, occurred after more than one thousand years. That moment, from an Iranian perspective, signified the return to a condition of ideal, primigenial order. Obviously, this is not devoid of cultural and political implications.

The 10-11th century CE is the historical age witnessing the formation and the establishment in the ʿAbbasid caliphate of a new political order, centered upon the institutional figure of the supreme army commander, the well-known figure of *al-amīr al-umarāʾ*. At that time, the idea of a possible renewal of the Persians' power was widely circulating, having a propagandistic usage. Certainly, it affects the modern scholarly reconstructions of this historical period, in which we are often dealing with the expression as 'Iranian renaissance',[13] not devoid of important implications on the cultural level. Sadly, however, in historical reconstructions the analysis focusses upon the *dynastic* membership and the *origin* of the representatives of the ruling élites. This attitude leads us to focus on whatever peculiar cultural features the homelands (the Iranian sub-Caspian regions, in this case) of the political protagonists of this age may have had, but the survey in order to define in what precisely consisted the Iranism of those regions is largely omitted. Then, given such formulations, the obvious conclusion is that the protagonists of the history of this period were the champions of an Iranism (very generic indeed) which was materializing in political terms just at this time. In other words, a mere confirmation of the most common historiographical stereotypes. What I want to stress here is that we are dealing with an issue concerning Islam as a whole. The involvement of etnhically Iranian elements in the so-called 'Iranian Renaissance' was not a reaction to Islam – as it is too easily asserted in modern times, and primarily in contemporary, learned Iran –, but rather the expression of a political protagonism displayed well inside the boundaries of Islam itself.

What is relevant is that this aspect – which is an exquisitely cultural aspect, even if it might have been subject to exploitations for the purposes of political discourse – *was not a new* one at this time. It *was already present* in the Islamic culture of this age in a structural way, under the form of general (shared) thought patterns regarding world history, actually conceived

13 The great success of this expression in handbooks on Islamic history is partially justified by the extraordinary vitality characterizing the artistic fields in the 10-11th century CE.

as a series of subsequent dynastic successions. This way of thinking was directly linked to an important aspect of astrology. According to D. Pingree: «The possibility of applying some of the methods of continuous horoscopy to predicting or reconstructing historical events was apparently first realized in Sasanian Iran» (1987, p. 870). Therefore, this kind of astrology was an ancient acquisition in Iran. Obviously enough, all innovations in this field were extremely productive politically, and the elucubrations of the astrologers became a widespread matter of debate. Indeed, as Pingree (1987, p. 870) states:

> annual events in society were predicted from the local theme cast for the moment of the vernal equinox. An ingenious approximate correlation was observed between the Zoroastrian concept of the twelve millennia [...] and the revolutions of the conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter. The conjunctions of these two planets were separated by approximately twenty years; the theme of the time of any conjunction was used to determine the course of public affairs during the following two decades. Twelve or thirteen successive conjunctions remain in the same triplicity for a period of some 240 or 260 years; the theme of the time of the first conjunction in a triplicity is regarded as deciding the fate of a dynasty. [...] These techniques were utilized by Islamic astrologers to reconstruct the past as well as to foretell the future.

A good example of the debate excited by astrological argumentations is a passage in the *Chronology* by al-Bīrūnī, written around 1000 CE. Here, the wide circulation during the 10-11th century CE of ideas explicitly connected to the political astrology based on the Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions is absolutely clear:

> People say that the Sasanian rule existed during *fiery* conjunctions. Now, the rule over Dailam was seized by ʿAlī b. Buwaihi called ʿImād-aldaula during fiery conjunctions. This is what people used to promise each other regarding the restoration of the rule to the Persians, although the doings of the Buwaihi family were not like those of the ancient kings. I do not know why they preferred the Dailamite dynasty, whilst the fact of the transitus into a *fiery Trigonon* is the most evident proof indicative of the Abbasid dynasty, who are a Khurāsānī, an eastern dynasty. Besides, both dynasties (Dailamites as well as Abbasides) are alike far from renewing the rule of the Persians and further still from restoring their ancient religion.[14]

14 al-Bīrūnī (1879), *Chronology of Ancient Nations*. (Transl. by Sachau, C. Edward), London: W.H. Allen & Co., p. 197.

In this passage, al-Bīrūnī relates and comments a *vox populi* that was circulating in his times on the subject. However, Bīrūnī *does not say* that the Buwayhids are Persians; he only says that one of them, ʿAlī, ruled over Daylam. Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, hating the hyperbolical expressions of the Buwahid propaganda, underlines that the Buwahids do not behave in the way of the ancient kings. Furthermore, he states that the Abbasid dynasty is an 'oriental' (*khurāsānī*) dynasty. This statement is linked to the idea that the passing of the conjunction Jupiter-Saturn into a fiery trigon would have given an indication of the uprising of a new oriental dynasty. It is clear that for al-Bīrūnī that passing indicated the uprising of the Abbasids – as they were 'oriental' – and not of the Buwayhids. The great scholar concludes affirming that, at any rate, both these dynasties do not aim at the renewal of the rule of the Persians and the restoration of their ancient religion. In other words, on the basis of his deep knowledge of the *astrological* matter, al-Bīrūnī tones down the *political* implications implicit in the discourse on Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions and the renewal of the Persians. For us, the most meaningful point lies in al-Bīrūnī's way of dealing with this issue: no doubt, he speaks elliptically. In the whole passage, he assumes that most of the assertions he makes are well-known to the potential readers of his work, implicitly giving us a good indication on the wealth of information of the people of his time.

In this perspective, I find noteworthy that the date of construction (1006 CE) of the aforementioned tower of Qābūs matches the 'middle conjunction' Jupiter-Saturn, indicating the passing from the fiery triplicity to the earthly one (this conjunction started in Leo and ended in Virgin). Such a passage occurs around ¼ of the 960-yearly cycle of Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions, that is, at the end of the first and the beginning of the second of the four periods making the entire cycle. The astrology of conjunctions believes those moments to be of extreme importance for the change of dynasties (the previous middle conjunction, in 749 CE, foreshadowed the upcoming of the Abbasid dynasty; see the above-quoted passage from al-Bīrūnī's *Chronology*).[15] All in all, the influence of such widespread ideas on Kūshyār al-Jīlī (and possibly al-Kharaqī) seems evident: having four possible years at his disposal, he deliberately chose the beginning of the third year (i.e. the medium point) of that quadriennium as the moment of coincidence between Nawrūz and the 1° of Aries.

15 A forecast on terrible political upheavals in connection with the conjunction Jupiter-Saturn in 397 Hijri (27 September 1006 CE-16 September 1007 CE) by the great Andalusian astronomer Maslama al-Majriṭī is also well-known (Samsó 1979, pp. 229-230).

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Ethnicity and Nationalism on the Northeastern Frontier

New Scenarios and Alternative Future for the China-India Disputed Border

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Abstract The Seven Sisters states are a region in the North-eastern India frontier comprising the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura. After the 1962 Sino-Indian war, China raised territorial claims on this wild region, rich in resources and featured by a strategic position. If China considers those areas be part of the national territory, due to an ethno-linguistic continuity of some people who live there, nevertheless the backbone of the region consists of an environment dense of historical and cultural elements that belong to India and, indeed, that go beyond its boundaries.

Today's ideological quarrel between the two Asian powers on the dorsal border of the eastern Himalayan clashes with the collective imagination of the Asian Century, where China and India are leading the markets and are potentially able to dictate the agenda of global development. Huge economic interests – the achievements of years of bilateral agreements and international trades – seems to be challenged by territorial claims over a still very problematic area in which critical issues, such as the so-called 'low-intensity' conflicts, are not yet resolved.

Separated by the rest of the Subcontinent by the Bangladeshi border, the North-eastern frontier has suffered for decades a condition of administrative isolation from the rest of India, with particular reference to a chronic lack of development planning. A region historically subject to inner tribal wars, the Seven Sisters host a number of separatist ethnic movements. The ethnical and cultural identity of indigenous minority groups has been often used to foster such pushes. Yet despite the exploitative nature of such efforts, indigenous tribes have managed to remain among the most important repositories of the local ancestral cultural heritage.

Our analysis consists in a comparison between historical studies on the region and the data collected during a two-years field research among the tribal communities of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The analysis suggests

that the dialogue with minorities, as well as the adoption of measures to protect the cultural heritage of the area and to foster a path of ecologically sustainable development could be a possible key for the normalization process of the area. It is indeed a policy that – in a historical perspective – could be pursued more effectively by Indian authorities than from any other country.

Moreover, just as during the Second World War, with the making of the new global order, the region played a major role due to its strategic importance, I argue how today – at the dawning of the Asian Century – this will be one of the most relevant focuses for the balance of the South Asian quadrant.

1 Introduction

The North-eastern border of India, known as the Seven Sisters, is composed by the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura. Despite the geographical-territorial peculiarities of each region, it is possible to outline the common characteristics to the entire North-east area. While we note the valuable specificities, such as a rich cultural heritage and an abundance of resources, there are other critical issues – such as isolation, lack of infrastructural development, the presence of centrifugal forces – the resolution of which will be the key to the future of India and its equilibrium with the surrounding countries. Since my fieldwork took place mainly in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, I will principally refer to the problems of these two States in order to draw a valid paradigm, at least on a theoretical level, for the border policies of the whole area.

I analyse the case of the recent Chinese claims of approximately 90,000 square kilometres of Indian territory which would include, therefore, the whole Arunachal Pradesh (83,743 sq. km). The question is, in our view, serious and delicate as it threatens to plunge the fragile regional balance and trigger a controversial scenario in the South Asian quadrant.

According to an historical approach, the origins of the so-called cartographic dispute between China and India ground their roots in the colonial context. In 1913-1914 was traced the famous McMahon line that more than an ancient Indian frontier, was rather a new border that replaced the previous boundary defined by the Outer Line. What we found interesting today is to note that the effective control and the practice of colonial authority of the areas included on the natural Himalayan dorsal – even in terms of exploring a wild and often little known territory at that time – focused in key periods of the modern history of the Indian subcontinent, in case of essentially strategic emergency. The Shimla agreements of 1913-1914, at the dawn of the First World War, served to expand the areas of British control by creating buffer zones around India and especially to keep China

away from the rich Assamese plain. Paradoxically, there was a period of political and administrative latency in the coming years, followed by a new increasing interest in the prelude to the Second World War. Then, the consolidation of boundaries became extremely relevant, because the area could alone spark off a chain reaction that would lead to the collapse of British colonial rule in India, something the Japanese invasion via Burma and the establishment of the Indian National Army of Bose were actually trying to achieve.

In contemporary times we see how the policies of border security and international pressure are accentuate in crucial moments, and both processes are taking place in the country, influenced and shaped by global processes as well. The policies of the 1950s in fact emerge from the matrix of nation-building process: whereas the line of Nehru’s foreign *pañcaśīla* fought hard with the fact that China had never really recognised the validity of the McMahon line. Hence, the unexpected Sino-Indian War of 1962 took place. Likewise today, at the dawn of the third millennium, as the Asian powers seem to contend among themselves the supremacy to lead the global markets, the issue resurfaces with renewed vigour. To be exact, we might add in parenthesis that an upsurge took place in 1987 with the incident of Sumdorong Chu Valley, only a skirmish between China and India, shortly forestalling, perhaps not coincidentally, a transition period for Indian politics and a change in the global order (the fall of the Berlin Wall and its consequences).

The conflict of 1962, however, creates an important precedent. While India was to reclaim the Aksai Chin on the side of Jammu and Kashmir, the overwhelming and unexpected advance of the People’s Liberation Army along the eastern ancient pilgrimage route to Lhasa, in Arunachal Pradesh – and its strategic retreat – have provided the pretext for the Chinese to claim not only on the disputed area of Tawang, but the whole region. But if for a moment we disregard the mere border issues or the military closely-related matters we will notice that the two Asian powers have no conflicts of interest substantially insoluble. Indeed, as stated Subramanian Swami, the tension between the two countries is probably dictated by the position of the Indian Government on the issue of Tibet, evidently perceived as ambiguous (Chen 2006, pp. 54-101). Not by chance that Arunachal Pradesh is defined by the Chinese as Southern Tibet (Subramanian Swami 2000).[1]

To conclude this historical introduction, I notice that anywhere in the world the post-colonial policies have created *ad hoc* new boundaries, often summarily without taking into account the pre-existing socio-political fab-

1 For a Chinese perspective on the issue, I suggest the interesting work of John W. Garver (2002; 2006, pp 86-130).

ric, for self-interest or in order to accelerate a hasty exit-strategy. So have been formed flashpoints of conflict still today unresolved. This is true in Africa, the Middle East, India, where for decades wars have been fought at different levels of intensity but that are generally considered hot spots on the planet. The most glaring example for India is clearly the Kashmir issue, unresolved since the time of Partition. In relation to the Western issue, it is interesting to note that after September 11 and the nominal accession of the Governments of India and Pakistan in the fight against international terrorism, the United States were expected to mediate on the Kashmir issue. At that time, A.B. Vajpayee and P. Musharraf demanded the intervention of the Bush administration, as well as the Pakistani side until now has been asking that of Obama. This mediation, even at the diplomatic level has been always denied, considering the Kashmiri issue as a matter of exclusive bilateral agreement between India and Pakistan. This choice seems blunder because on the one hand – in our opinion – is a refusal to participate in a peace process by a nation that has always wanted to rise herself as a leading power for the West and as a global model of democracy. Indeed under a strictly technical perspective, the so-called Line of Control would be considered *de facto* a diplomatic pact of bilateral nature signed through the 1972 Shimla agreement on a previous consensus of non-aggression between two countries (cease-fire line). On the other hand, the question of the Line of Actual Control, or the current China-India border, seems to be different: whereas coinciding with the layout of the old McMahon Line, this had to be a tripartite cartel never accepted *in toto* by China (Warikoo 2009). The intrinsic fragility of the border seems emphasized by the word ‘Actual’, in fact, broken by numerous accidental crossings in recent years. After several agreements to reduce tension on the border, the last agreement of 2005 is based on a previous exchange of maps between China and India primarily aimed at defining the respective perceptions of LAC. Despite the positive statements of intent for the future of China-India bilateral relations (Text of India-China Agreement, 2005), the cyclic undertow of Chinese claims on the northeast returns as a refrain following dynamics of the global order or though the international attention moves to the Tibetan issue. In this paper we will show how the challenge for India in this case is two-fold: domestic politics and international relations. Perhaps the resolution of an aspect of the problem entails in itself the solution of the second.

2 The Century of Asia, Geopolitics and Economics

In the contemporary international economic profile, while facing the global economic crisis on the basis of the life jacket provided by the recent decades of economic boom, the strongest markets have proved to be Asian. In this context, both China and India have asserted their leading role to

such an extent that the expression 'the Century of Asia' has become itself almost a cliché.

However, this scenario still creates some confusion in the Western hemisphere where a 'Century of Asia' is perceived as alarming because it inherently assumes the contemporary setting of the Western, or rather American, Century. The threat of losing the carefully cultivated supremacy if only from an economic point of view has generated a sense of insecurity in the West that is at times filled with implausible scenarios. In the past the categorisation 'Asia' has suggested the erroneous idea of a platform common to all major Asian powers sharing strategic or at least political and economic guidelines. This expedient was trying to foreshadow an 'alterity' that if not an outright 'enemy', in some way confirmed the presence of a 'rival' of the third millennium. As a result, in Italy for example the unfortunate expression 'Cindia' (a combination of China and India) gained some popularity based on the idea that the two Asian powers were living in a cultural continuum, sharing the goal planning. However, nothing could be further from the truth. If it is impossible to include the two countries in an ethnical, cultural, political, strategic or economic developmental macro-category except for patterns broadly common to the emerging economies (BRIC) – which must be applied, however, in different ways – such considerations can be extended to the whole pan-Asian context. A striking example is represented by the guidelines for securing the future energy supply in Asia, including the bilateral discussions between India and the US aimed at achieving a deal on nuclear energy, the detached attitude of China and the failure of the Obama mission on the emission of greenhouse gas in Beijing at the end of 2009.

Conversely, the opposite idea of a rival-East split, intended to be consumed by intestine frictions, may have lulled in an ephemeral way those who like to depict apocalyptic war scenarios.

If it is true that the unprecedented economic growth of China and India has substantially raised these countries' status in the world economy, it is equally true that this growth has been accompanied by a rapid expansion of bilateral trade between the two largest developing countries (Wu and Zhou 2006, pp. 509-518). In 2011-2012, the bilateral trade between China and India has reportedly reached a total volume of US $ 75,594.44 million, an increase of 28.21% compared to 2010/2011[2] (See also WTO 2011 p. 12-44). As further economic reforms will support this growth, a proportional increase of the exchange between the two neighbouring systems is expected. Other parameters could implement this trend by adopting an economic policy aimed at the exploits and the exchange of each country's

2 Government of India, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Dept. of Commerce, updated 2012-10-10.

comparative advantage following the dynamics of overlapping, reciprocal complement – already implemented as training process – between the strongest sectors, i.e. the industrial sector in China and the tertiary sector (services) in India (Saran, Guo 2005, pp. 135-142).

Recent studies in economics show that as the two countries have followed different lines of economic development leading to diverging rates of growth over time (except for the directives aimed at the supply of energy, which is one of the priorities of the third millennium) the productive sectors in which there is an effective overlap such as to create rivalry are few.

It is difficult in this scenario to assume that the two countries would be ready to undo what has been built so far. China's future challenge is to deal with the enormous social pressure caused by unemployment and underemployment, the solution of which would seem to lie in maintaining a relatively high rate of growth. India too aims at accelerating the somewhat sluggish pace of its economic development, for instance by improving its infrastructure. In either case, the challenges of the future will not likely be resolved through an armed conflict (Athwal 2008, p. 5). At the dawn of the third millennium, no nation is ready put its wealth at risk by venturing into a military conflict for reasons of mere cartographic matter, unless the stakes are not higher.

Illustrative in this sense is an episode dating back to October 29, 2008, when the then British foreign minister, David Miliband, declared that after nearly a century of support for Tibetan autonomy on the part of Great Britain, the Government had decided to recognize Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China and even apologized for this not happening before (Booker 2010). While the news made the headlines in the newspapers around the world, creating a stir for the dramatic turnabout of British politics, the Indian side perceived it with lightness and a sense of little responsibility on the part of who was once a colonial power, in matters of international relations and historical succession. To wipe the slate clean, the Shimla agreement was labelled as somehow anachronistic and so was the McMahon Line, with all the consequences entailed in the yet unresolved question of the Northeastern border between India and China. It should be remembered that it was on the principles of the Shimla that the war of 1962 and the dangerous accident of 1987 took place. Few however noted that the declarations by Miliband in the same month of 2008 were preceded by the request of Gordon Brown, the British prime minister, to China to increase its contributions to the International Monetary Fund, in return for which the latter would have seen an increase of the votes in its favour in the United Nations (Barnett 2008, A31).

When I met His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama shortly after the attacks of September 11, he noted with regret that international attention would be shifted to the 'new' emergencies, moving the Tibetan issue to the back-

ground. The US-Western military escalation in Afghanistan and in the Middle East, the search for new allies in the international war on terrorism and the policy of no-inference of China in these processes would have definitely revealed the world's oblivion on the open wound of Tibet. The fact that this very question has a direct connection with the disputed northeastern border became clear when new Chinese territorial claims arrived soon after. Well before the episode of the Sumdorong Valley in 1986, the Chinese vice foreign minister Liu Shuquing declared that about 90,000 square kilometers of Chinese territory were under Indian occupation. In November 2006 the Chinese ambassador to India, Sun Yuxi, asserted China's territorial claim over the entire Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh in spite of an agreement between the two countries one year earlier.

Yet another point in our perspective is the fact that the several times deferred Dalai Lama's visit to Tawang district, which took place in 2009 on the border, caused great nervousness on the Chinese side. This area is of great strategic importance that spreads beyond the defensive Indian line at the Se La Pass. It shortly fell into Chinese hands during the conflict in 1962 but later returned to India administration, this is the first of the disputed territories. Historically and culturally a part of Tibet, the important monastery of Tawang was founded in 1681 at the behest of the fifth Dalai Lama and the surrounding valley is the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama. The road connecting Tawang to the Tibetan fortress of Dirang in West Kameng was the last outpost of the ancient eastern Buddhist pilgrimage route to Lhasa. The closedown on the Western Front of the Aksai Chin adds strategic value to the territory beyond its intrinsic historical and cultural heritage. The frequent 'accidental' Chinese incursions on through the border were undoubtedly intended to reaffirm these territorial claims.

However, the extent of China's interest to the whole State are possibly dictated by a series of geo-political factors: Arunachal Pradesh represents a strategic passage connecting the Brahmaputra valley with Lhasa and the Chinese province of Yunnan, thereby allowing China to control the entire area. Beyond the State's potential in the areas of tourism and agriculture it is rich in mineral deposits and has large tracts of forest. Finally, control of this area would allow China to gain continuity on the eastern side of Bhutan while at the same time providing a further road of access to the markets of South-East Asia (Liu 1994).

The issue of hydroelectric resources seems particularly relevant because it can become a paradigm of the entire situation of Northeast. China and India both depend strongly on the flow of waters downhill from the Tibetan region as a resource for drinking water, agriculture, energy production and the needs for present and future industrial production. One of the most important challenges for the future of Arunachal Pradesh is the so called 'riparian issue'. Most rivers of the State have an enormous potential for being exploited for producing hydro-power to the tune of 49,126 megawatt

of electricity (Goswami 2011, p. 10). Arunachal Pradesh has signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with private groups for the construction of around 103 dams in the State. These projects have sometimes caused anxiety among the local population about the indiscriminate use of the territory, the fear of seismic instability or flooding during the monsoon season. In fact, accidents in Chinese plants across the border are frequent, the repercussions of which were felt also in the villages on the Indian side. Moreover, almost all rivers that in the region originate and flow through Chinese territory before reaching India thus resulting in a certain dependence of the latter on the former: hence, the planning issue in Arunachal Pradesh follows the well-known vexed question of the deviation of the Yangtze-Brahmaputra on a minor scale. The threat of diversion of river water to compensate drought problems in the most remote areas of China entails the obvious risk of environmental disaster in North-east India. This is because international laws permit any country to use the run-off water of any river within its territory, but in the case the river is trans-boundary the Customary International Law requires that the interest of the riparian states have to be taken into account by ensuring equitable distribution of water, leaving a vague definition of how to assess 'a reasonable share'.

The riparian issue – since water is one of the most important natural resource, but also a fundamental right – is steadily becoming a geopolitical weapon and an instrument of pressure by Chinese side on the central stage of the so-called Seven Sisters scenario. Vice versa the Indian planning to build dams on Arunachal rivers, and possibly in the neighbouring territories, seems to be the key primarily to counter the Chinese claim. Is interesting to note that while the West seemed to bow to the Chinese power at the dawn of the global economic crisis, in June 2009, for the first time ever on a multi-lateral forum, China tried to block India's request for a $2.9 billion loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as it included $60 million for flood management, water supply, and a sanitation project in Arunachal Pradesh. According to ADB sources China was unhappy at India seeking funds for a project in what they termed as 'disputed territory'. The ADB however approved the loan on the grounds that there is no history of the ADB deferring a loan to India (Goswami 2011, p. 3).

3 Nationalism, Ethnicity, Violence, a Theoretical Approach

The ethnic variety of the population of the Seven Sisters is perhaps one of the most distinctive features of the territory. Further to that, one should also consider the ability of many local communities to preserve their own cultural and linguistic identity. The Hindu socio-cultural background – soundly established in the peninsular part of the Subcontinent – here meets with the customs of the descendants of those who, over the centuries, migrated

from China, Tibet, Burma, Thailand and Southeast Asia. It is generally recognised that these people – whom linguistic anthropology taxonomies as Tibeto-Burma speakers and the Sanskrit literature call Kirata – formerly occupied the whole region of the Northeast. On the one hand, some communities settled around the valley of the Brahmaputra (e.g. Bodos, Garo, Kacharis, Tripuris, Hajongs, etc.). On the other, many communities migrated from the north in order to find an area suitable for new villages, and they settled into the valleys (e.g. Tani, Adi, Monpa, etc.) (Mibang and Behera 2007).

For historians and anthropologists the Ahom period (1228–1826) is particularly important because it was possible to establish an administrative system holding together several ethnic groups. Also, the patronage of Hindu religious institutions favoured the filtration of Brahminical (and particularly *śakta*) elements. Following the practice of *divide and impera*, some groups, potentially clashing with the authority, were fragmented and dispersed in different areas of the territory. According to the process that was theorised by D.D. Kosambi, such communities were reintegrated into the new matrix acting on the mutual recognition of their status and their functions within the society (Kosambi 1965). This presupposes a certain *continuum* and permeability between the concepts of tribe and caste that here emerge more perceptible here than elsewhere (Chattopadhyaya 2002).[3]

Within this multi-ethnic milieu, vernacular forms of Hinduism were assimilated thus becoming absorbed in the local variety of tribal traditions and ritual practices. The same applies to Buddhism, whose schools, historically present in the valleys, have interpreted in *dharmic* terms the local cultural environment and its enculturation. In this scenario, the long shadow casted by the forest or the highest peaks seems to veil the boundary between traditions. While religious traditions and rituals seem inextricably linked, specialist figures like the brahmin, the *pūjārī*, the lama, the oracle and the shaman do recognise each other for authority and charisma within their community. Very different realities so often live in constricted areas, sometimes in the same village, in a plurality of elements difficult to be discovered elsewhere. These special cultural clusters therefore seem to conglomerate – cohesive in some way to a sense of continuity with ancient traditions – around the focal points of the complex grid of precisely Hindu and Buddhist sacred geography.

This is confirmed by Bhagabati (2009, p. 4) who individuates three stages of social transformation, i.e. migration, [cultural] adaptation strategies, negotiation of space. Bhagabati notes that the mobility of the hill tribes was no doubt originally inspired by the struggle for living spaces. As histo-

3 A clear example is in Assam the historic integration of different Deori/Chutiya groups.

ry – and the cosmogonical memory itself of the clans – shows, these groups were constantly fighting each other, conflicts of feud take place, so that the Ahom themselves in many cases waived to collect taxes but rather they paid the bribes of the so-called *posa* in order to maintain the stability of the territories (Singh 1995, p. 14). But migration and subsequent adaptation to new homelands – a process that could lead to variables on the names and the new identities – were possible under a social context essentially fluid and flexible to incorporate new immigrants.

This kind of micro-equilibrium would be threatened by the radicalisation of social boundaries that took place as consequence of colonialism as well as some aspects of post-colonial policies. This would cause the onset of many centrifugal forces in the actual processes of nation-building in India. These, however, are so numerous and complexes that I would not analyse them although I will look into their origins.

In his *Imagined Communities* (1991), Anderson informs us that the idea of the nation as a community socially constructed is imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of this group. In his conclusions, he shifts the focus on colonialism. Nationalism in Europe is said to be followed by the diffusion of a similar process in colonised countries. In Chapter 7, *The Last Wave*, it would come to the paradox to reconfigure the concept of national history in an attempt to shape the consciences in colonial context. The overflow of the so-called 'last wave' mould the idea of the nation in a conscious way, by virtue of the fact that the nation-State has become a criterion established at the international level. In Chapter 10 (*Census, Map and Museum*), Anderson describes the attempt of the European State-model of the 19th century to control its domain by counting the population, mapping the territory and hegemonising history. People were systematically classified, catalogued through the instrument of the Census, which creates a 'community dimension' that is substantially fictitious, because imagined, pre-established. Similarly, the attempt to objectify some specific natural geographical subdivisions, became functional in the mechanism to map the nation, that become the icon, the distinguished logo of national movements. The museum, or rather the national monument, which creates and maintains a tradition also becomes a symbol immediately recognisable and functional in this sense. The serialisation process was also the key element of the State's attempt, also in the overseas colonies, to establish a 'totalizing classificatory grid' (Jaffrelot 2003, p. 12).

On the one hand there is no doubt that all this happened in India too, in colonial times due to the British rule. The first great works of Census especially aimed at the classification of those minorities regarded as dangerous – not coincidentally after the Mutiny. The perfunctory creation of functional boundaries, the presumption of educating Indian subjects, the ideological inference on nation-building process can be as well quoted.

The limit of Anderson, as well as the study of Ernest Gellner (1983), is to

consider the nation and nationalism as a product of modernity, created *ad hoc* for economic-political reasons. In this process the tradition – a matter not to be underestimated in a country whose culture and religion convey valuable concepts for the society, in front of the West that seems increasingly weak in this regard – here would result a fictitious expedient useful to the cause. India has instead demonstrated its ability to self-keep its own traditions, as well as the talent to renovate them at the occurrence, without inference from the outside on its largely in past ages achieved rank of civilisation. This allows the country to be a place where tradition and modernity coexist balanced.

Nevertheless, the analysis of Anderson interprets well what was the colonial history of India. If we pass from the country’s general view to the particular of the Northeast, the result does not change. The key role of the British administration was, once again, the disruption of previous social balance and the establishment of new boundaries. The most striking aspect was the introduction in 1873 of the Inner line that in addition to bisect the region, ideologically created a separation between tribal and non-tribal people. In synthesis, can be accepted that this was the beginning of discrimination, sanctioned through a formal separation between the cadastral rich areas – the Assamese plains, privileged, protected and exploited – and wild areas, that soon reached the status of ‘excluded’ in the Act of 1935. The former had to bear socio-economic and administrative measures on the cadastral mapping of the region, while in the impossibility to overtax the latter otherwise logistic or strategic advantage was taken exploiting the local population at the dawn of world conflicts. The biggest fault of this period was the raising of new boundaries, freezing a reality that since then had been fluid, by its nature. The colonial concept of tribe in turn was wrong in imagining a static and closed social structure, whereas since then the local communities maintained a code, while complex, of relative permeability and sharing alliances and cultural identities.

To this system that was gradually hardening through the demarcation of new borders, the British Raj added the weight of immigration. If the Bengali influence was present at the arrival of the British in the area, in the early 20th century there was the systematization of the transfer of masses of Bengali Hindus who formed the backbone of the colonial administration. In a second time will be added to these masses of peasants generally Muslims pour into the region in search of new lands. These two groups of migrants remained two discrete formations, episodic coalition and ethnic block formation out of political expediency notwithstanding (Bhagabati 2009, p. 7). Also interesting in an anthropological perspective, the formation of a common social platform of the ādivāsīs who were employed as tea workers: although ethnically different, they got-together united in the plantations of Assam. Finally, as a result of colonial policies, I can mention the masses of Nepali in search of occupation and a small but

significant percentage of Marwari and Sindhi and other groups from different parts of India. If these flows have inevitably created tensions with the Assamese and the North-eastern communities, the post-Independence policies have someway aggravated the situation. With the partition of East Pakistan first and the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 followed an economic crisis for the states of the Northeast. The lines of communication with the rest of India by road, by rail, or through the waterways, or the inland navigation, were rudely interrupted. At the same time, any port access was lost. To date the subject is highly topical (Patak 2012, pp. 19-23): the region has faced a steady stream of irregular migrants in search of work from the border with Bangladesh. Something similar happened apropos of the Tibetan question. After granting asylum state to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, many Tibetan communities, also on the eastern side, have over time settled as refugees. In synthesis, the role played by the Indian Government in international politics, while legitimate and justified in a South-Asian regional context, in the first as well as in the second case produced the side-effect of social pressure of immigration. In both cases, this social pressure has been charged to the Northeast, and I think this is the perception of the problem from the Seven Sisters perspective.[4] But since the North-eastern frontier has suffered for decades a condition of administrative isolation from the rest of India, with particular reference to a chronic lack of development planning, the local groups are not willing to bear, or to cope alone with such a pressure.

In this contest it is experienced the overlap of both forms of migration that Robin Cohen suggested in his *Global Diasporas* (1997, p. 78), or those produced by empires, colonial policies or consequential ethnic boundaries, and those related to the features, necessities or the research itself of the occupation. Despite the protean nature of the communities in the Northeast, nowadays two opposing factions are taking shape primarily throughout the region: insiders and outsiders facing each other in competition for living space, resources, employments. As an example I would remember to have seen several times in Arunachal Pradesh writings on the walls of the houses in some villages: *Tibetans go home*. The phrase mainly strikes the stranger because it clashes in every way with an imaginary consolidated over the past decades: India welcomes the Tibetan refugees, the Tibetans are a friendly and peaceful people. Last but not least, the phrase is not written in Hindi, Assamese and Tibetan but in English: an international message. Here it is how, a slogan written on a wall is in turn index of a great perceived stress, but at the same time it suggests the emergency of an incipient and dangerous xenophobia. The anti-Muslim crusades that

4 Acknowledgement to prof. Sanjoy Hazarika for the materials of the *Discussion on the Situation in Assam* conference, held in September at the Jamia Millia Islamia University of Delhi.

have occurred in the country in response to pressure on the Bangladeshi border have the same nature.

If we look at the theories on the ethnicity, not those that deal with the primordialist paradigm, but those who deal with the process of formation of boundaries between groups, we will see that there is a clear parallel with the above theories on nationalism. Fredrik Barth focused the determining process of ethnicity as the predominance of relationships within the group – and in turn the relationship of the group with the outside world – compared to the importance of transmitted real cultural contents (Barth 1969, pp. 9-37). In this sense, the tribal communities of India have experienced colonial isolationism. Conversely, after Independence, they have been forced towards economic development with a syncopated rhythm from area to area, and often without freedom to make choices. Although in the Northeast have been taken a gradual policy, there is a widespread perception that the specificities of each cultural identity were neglected in the general process of nation-building. Consequently those identities have been the pretext to create the new platforms of ethnicity. In other words, the communities once more flexible, conglomerating clusters of versatile nature, now become ethno-political blocks. Here the revival originated socio-political programs: is interesting in this regard the Donyi-Poloism, a form of purged shamanism, theoretically elected as a philosophical system, an *ādidharma*, that if on one side sees the contribution of intellectuals and local intelligentsia (mainly Adi) has lost the connection with the contents and dynamics of authentic local tribalism (Mibang, Chaudhuri 2004, pp. 35-38, 53-62, 159-172). It's much more serious is the embedding of the onset of armed groups, terrorists, who use the exacerbation of ethnicity as a tool towards separatism.[5] It would appear that subsists more similarity between the processes of ethnicity and nationalism – that here fragmented, exacerbated, seems to take the violent connotations of what anthropologists defined 'African tribalism' – that between theories of nationalism and the nation itself (Jaffrelot 2003, pp. 2, 41-46). Here too, the sacred is a constant of human social life and the modern world is not an exception, its novelty lies only in the fact that the national form assumes an essentially secular feature. Anderson already showed that so far as sacred and secular may appear to be two antithetical orders, they intersect in what will become the key symbols of the nation: the monument, the [new] flag, etc. Yet in India, how not to think of dense debate between Gandhi and Rabindhranath Thakur, where the Indian Nobel-laureate warned the Mahatma about the dangers of nationalism and hoped the clearing of the symbols for a good of a higher nature?

5 The casualties in these so called 'low-intensity' conflicts are more than 5000 since 2005, but since Independence seems to be ten times greater in number. See «Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in India's Northeast 2005-2012» in *South Asia Terrorism Portal*.

4 Conclusion

The Indian Government has been many times in a jam wavering on the policy to be held in Northeast. Despite the mission statement of PM Manmohan Singh to descending at the negotiating table with the separatist groups, it became soon clear that to give way to a single specific instance, in the absence of uniform guidelines, means trigger the replication of many other requests. The large number of these groups and the complexity of the internal relations amongst them, inflamed again the resurgence of terrorism just after the beginning of the consultations, by virtue of the negotiations between the Government and a single faction among many rivals. In the best of cases, even in a nonviolent context, the stress and discomfort of tribal communities and ethnic minorities – many of which have faraway origins, but today are considered autochthonous compared to new migrants – are due largely to problems of definition of their role in the nation. By themselves the *ādivāsī* communities in the first place, are trying to fill a historical vacuum crystallised increasingly in modern times, are implementing strategies to adapt to the contemporary, but in this effort they feel obviously alone in front of globalization's processes. Any attempt to standardisation conceivably will lead to a radicalisation of diversity, especially today that thanks to the power of media there is greater self-awareness but a larger possibility of manipulation of issues such as ethnicity. Then we come to the hypothesis of a possible solution in the reversal of the theory of Barth, or rather to privilege the cultural contents of the tradition of the groups as for the respect to their position in the social system, in order to break down boundaries and strenuous resistances. Working in this way it would be possible to switch from the rigid characterisation of 'ethnicity' to the positive value of 'cultural identity' of the specific ethnic minorities.

Until recently, the question of the origins of civilisation in India has proved to be of central importance. The scientific discoveries of the academy seemed to have a direct impact on policy, as the awareness of the origins of the subcontinent could be a paradigm of governance model for present and future. Today, scholars are realising that even before the theories on ethnicity and nationalism, the challenge for the future will be based on establishing the identity of the ethnic and tribal communities. I noted how the most conservative forces in the country are working hard to forcefully bring back the tribal theories to the Hindu dharma. On the other hand I had the impression that the Marxist structuring or at least more progressive positions on the issue exert at all costs to find an alien root for the tribal groups, as if it would be necessary to reinterpret the concept of a multicultural and multi-ethnic India. Here is clear that the truth lies somewhere in between: the investigation of origins – autochthonous, cross-border, or sunk into oblivion – is less important at present. Since it is pos-

sible to reconstruct it, history shows that tribal communities have always been able to interface with others, whether with Mughal rulers, or Hindu Raja, Buddhist schools, or other *jati*s. With them they always maintained an osmotic cultural relationship: exactly as the osmosis is bidirectional, reciprocal, bilateral. The key is here, the maintaining fluidity in the relationships through the promotion and respect for cultural identities. This can only be done by those who, in turn, could be described as the new *pañcaśīla* cultural identity: tribe, caste, religion, language, territory. In other words, respect of the ancestry's relationship of the groups with the territory, recovery of traditional values, protection of culture – as reconstruction of the history of the region, as defence of linguistic specificity and as guarantee of religious freedom – goals achievable only through the enhancement and the right to education of young people. Finally the development of the area is to be thought as sustainable by the societies involved and eco-compatible with one of the last pristine areas of the planet.

Only in this way the look that embraces the North-eastern India passes through the *śaktipīṭha* of Kamakhya, the Pambari Masjid, the Tawang Monastery, through all the villages of ādivāsīs who live in the valleys of the Himalayas and the thick of its forests and ends in Parashuram Khund, near the border with Burma, where it is said, no by coincidence, that rises the sun of India. If we abstract for a moment from the borders of the maps and we imagine how forward the cultural influence of India have naturally thrust herself, we will be going over the natural boundaries, confirming once again the emptiness of whose Edward Said called *Imagined Geographies* (1999, pp. 56-60, 74-78).

At this point it will be clear how the Chinese perspectives are absolutely aliens to such a context, the major riparian projects appear here only as a threat of environmental disaster, and the reasons behind the territorial claims are only a theoretical vacuum. At the same time it is interesting to note that China faces too in its territory centrifugal forces of various kinds: in addition to the issue of Tibet, there are pushes that emerges from a religious, civil, or ethnic matrix. But from the little filtered through a state of information's censorship, these centrifugal forces are regularly drowned with the isolation and repression. For this reason, China has basically been called the land of a thousand revolts. It is on this premise, a weakness that never in history has occurred, that China intends to take possession of an unstable territory that never bowed to foreign domination? Or only through the values of Indian democracy will be possible to work on a development, normalization and peace project for the future? The answer is obvious. So far as the implications of political and economic order are complex enough to assume a general slowdown in the development rate of the country, the necessary time spent here will benefit a framework that is a testing ground for other set of regional problems and at the same time the key to the India's future.

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La costruzione numerale (一 *yī*) + classificatore nelle frasi copulative in cinese: un articolo indefinito?

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Abstract The increase in frequency of the numeral construction 一 *yī* «one» + Classifier functioning as a marker of indefiniteness, observed in written Chinese in the first decades of the last century, is considered a product of the influence of the European languages. Actual data, however, seem to reject the hypothesis of a pure grammatical borrowing and demonstrate that the construction has undergone the full process of grammaticalization through which the numeral «one» has developed into the indefinite article in other languages. The function of the numeral construction in copulative sentences, where its increase has been particularly relevant, is here analyzed in order to understand what triggers its presence, being the choice of a bare NP always available in Chinese in these contexts. Data suggest that it is used when the speaker's stance is involved, a pragmatic feature at least partially shared by the indefinite article of some European languages.

1 Introduzione

Nella prima sistematica analisi del fenomeno dell'europeizzazione del nuovo *baihua*[1] agli inizi del Novecento, Wang Li indica tra i cambiamenti sintattici più significativi subiti dal cinese per effetto del contatto con le lingue occidentali il forte aumento della costruzione numerale 一 *yī* «uno» + CL in funzione di marca nominale indefinita (Wang [1943] 1985, pp. 370-373; Wang [1944] 1984, pp. 488-490; Wang [1958] 1980, pp. 464-

1 Il termine «nuovo *baihua*» si riferisce alla lingua scritta, basata sul «vecchio *baihua*» dei grandi romanzi in vernacolo, che negli anni dieci del secolo scorso sostituì il *wenyan*, la lingua letteraria modellata sui classici. L'europeizzazione, ossia l'influenza delle lingue occidentali su lessico, sintassi e organizzazione del discorso del cinese scritto attraverso la massiccia attività di traduzione concentrata soprattutto nei primi decenni del Novecento, è un fenomeno riconosciuto dalla maggior parte dei linguisti e secondo Wang Li ha prodotto nel cinese «una trasformazione più profonda di quella subita nell'intero periodo che va dagli Han ai Qing» ([1944] 1984, p. 434).

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468). Wang spiega il fenomeno come un calco dell'articolo indefinito delle lingue europee, che trova in cinese un pratico equivalente nel numerale 一 *yī* seguito dai due classificatori generici 个 *gè*, per i nomi concreti, e 种 *zhǒng* per i nomi astratti (Wang [1944] 1984, p. 372, Wang [1958] 1980, p. 467),[2] portando a ipotizzare anche in cinese la genesi di un articolo indefinito dal numerale «uno».

L'ipotesi dell'influenza delle sintassi europee sembra convincente soprattutto perché Wang collega l'aumento nell'uso di 一 *yī* + CL ad altri fenomeni apparsi nella lingua del periodo, facendo supporre l'effetto a valanga spesso attestato nei cambiamenti lessicali e morfosintattici dovuti al contatto tra lingue. Il diffondersi della costruzione numerale è associato infatti al contemporaneo aumento dell'uso nominale di verbi e aggettivi per tradurre i concetti astratti importati dall'occidente, e all'aumento di determinanti nominali complessi caratterizzati da più livelli di incassatura, indotti dalla traduzione delle frasi relative o gerundive che abbondano nel periodare delle lingue europee. Essendo una marca tipica degli elementi nominali, 一 *yī* + CL «permette all'interlocutore o al lettore di prevedere la natura nominale dell'elemento che lo segue aumentando così notevolmente la chiarezza della comunicazione» (Wang [1958]1980, p. 468) e nello stesso tempo facilita l'individuazione e la decodifica di modificatori nominali complessi. L'uso di 一 *yī* + CL in funzione di marca nominale indefinita parrebbe quindi inserirsi perfettamente nella logica che spinse gli intellettuali dell'inizio del secolo scorso a ricorrere con consapevolezza a forme europeizzate nella creazione del nuovo *baihua*: risponderebbe infatti all'esigenza di rendere più chiara e precisa la lingua attraverso l'uso di marche morfologiche esplicite, permettendo quindi quella più complessa articolazione del periodo che avrebbe dovuto dare alla nuova lingua una maggiore dignità letteraria (Fu [1919] 2000; He 2008).

Le frasi copulative predicative costituiscono il contesto sintattico in cui l'aumento della costruzione numerale è stato più notato e per questo sono state scelte come ambito di questa analisi, che si prefigge l'obiettivo di verificare l'effettiva influenza dell'europeizzazione sul fenomeno e individuare le ragioni che determinano la scelta del parlante tra un SN a determinante 0 (ØSN) e un SN modificato dalla costruzione numerale (Num+CL), confrontando quest'ultima con l'uso dell'articolo indefinito.

2 La distinzione non è accurata, come ammette Wang Li stesso ([1943] 1985, p. 488). Anche 一个 *yī gè* può infatti precedere nomi astratti e anzi nello stesso periodo Lü Shuxiang ([1944] 1984, p. 150) indica 个 *gè* come il classificatore più usato davanti a forme verbali nominalizzate esprimenti concetti astratti. Mentre la progressiva opacizzazione della funzione categorizzante di 个 *gè* consente a questo classificatore di associarsi a svariati tipi di nomi diventando un classificatore generico (Lü [1944] 1984, p. 148 e 150; Chao 1968, p. 508; Li, Thompson 1981, p. 112; Biq 2004, p. 1659), l'impiego di 种 *zhǒng* è molto più limitato perché il suo significato di «tipo, genere» non gli permette un uso generalizzato.

2 La frase copulativa predicativa in cinese e il contatto con le lingue europee

Dal momento che le frasi copulative specificative e identificative generalmente prevedono alla destra del verbo un SN con referenza unica o definita che esclude la presenza di marche indefinite, si considerano qui soltanto le frasi copulative predicative, frasi cioè il cui scopo comunicativo è attribuire al referente extralinguistico individuato dal SN soggetto la proprietà espressa dal contenuto lessicale del SN alla destra del verbo copulativo, in cinese tipicamente 是 *shì* «essere».

Il SN postverbale nella frase copulativa predicativa cinese può apparire in una delle tre seguenti forme:

A) Nome a determinante 0: ØSN

1) 他是老师。
[Lui essere insegnante]

B) Nome preceduto dal solo class ificatore: CL + N
2) 他是个老师。
[Lui essere CL insegnante]

C) Nome preceduto da 一 *yī* + CL: 一 *yī* + CL + N
3) 他是一个老师。
[Lui essere uno CL insegnante]

L’accettabilità di tutti e tre gli esempi è sufficiente a dimostrare l’assenza di motivazioni sintattiche che richiedano la presenza della Num+CL, indispensabile invece in altri contesti (Lu 1988) per garantire la grammaticalità della frase. Non paiono inoltre sussistere significative differenze semantiche tra le alternative (Zhang, Li 2002) e le tre frasi corrispondono tutte all’italiano «Lui è (un) insegnante». Sulla base dell’analisi di Wang Li, si potrebbe supporre che A sia la forma non marcata della frase copulativa cinese e che l’uso della Num+CL sia semplicemente un calco dalle lingue occidentali, meccanico in traduzione o volto a un puro effetto stilistico nella scrittura. Molte delle innovazioni sintattiche del cinese europeizzato, infatti, non sono state adottate per colmare vuoti grammaticali della lingua, ma per conferire al nuovo *baihua* uno stile più formale e letterario rispetto al vecchio *baihua* (He 2008, p. 286).

Per dimostrare su basi statistiche l’effetto dell’europeizzazione sull’aumento della Num+CL, He (2008, p. 99) confronta un corpus di frasi copulative tratte da testi in vecchio *baihua* (corpus 1) con un corpus di frasi copulative tratte da testi moderni (anni Venti e Trenta del Novecento), contemporanei e tradotti (corpus 2). Il confronto rivela un significativo

aumento della forma C nel corpus 2 (41% di occorrenze contro il 24% nel corpus 1), una sostanziale parità di occorrenze della forma A (37, 7% nel corpus 1 contro il 33,9% nel corpus 2) e una percentuale più alta (54,1%) della forma B nel corpus 1 rispetto al corpus 2 (25%).

Se il forte aumento di 一 *yī* + CL in un lasso temporale così breve sembra confermare l’effetto del contatto linguistico, è necessario tuttavia considerare che secondo la maggioranza degli autori (Lü [1944]1984; Zhang, Li 2002; Tang 2005; Chen 2003; Biq 2004 e altri), B è soltanto la riduzione fonetica di C, del tutto equivalente dal punto di vista semantico e funzionale.[3] Se le forme B and C, di seguito unificate in (一 *yī*) + CL, sono equivalenti, sommando le loro percentuali nei dati di He, il totale dei SN modificati da (一 *yī*) + CL è 64% nel vecchio *baihua* e 66% in cinese moderno. La quasi parità di occorrenze nei due *corpora* dimostra quindi che l’alternativa tra ØSN e SN modificato da un CL era pienamente disponibile prima dell’europeizzazione e che l’uso di (一 *yī*) + CL in una funzione assimilabile a quella di marca indefinita era già presente nel vecchio *baihua*.[4] L’influenza delle lingue europee pare quindi principalmente limitata all’aumento delle occorrenze del numerale 一 *yī*, come dimostrano anche alcuni commenti dei più feroci critici dell’europeizzazione. Tsai, per esempio, definisce l’uso di 一 *yī* nel SN postverbale delle frasi copulative «wasteful and ugly», ma ammette il solo CL (1995, p. 244), confermando che ciò che può far percepire la frase come innaturale o ridondante è la presenza del numerale.

Pur considerando l’influenza delle lingue europee nell’ampliare ulteriormente l’uso della forma B, soprattutto in questi ultimi decenni in cui il contatto linguistico è sempre più forte ed esteso anche alla lingua parlata,

3 Soltanto Cheng, Sybesma (1999, pp. 525-527) e Li, Bisang (2012, pp. 344-347) sostengono che B e C abbiano invece strutture profonde diverse. La loro ipotesi si basa su criteri distribuzionali (B non comparirebbe mai in posizione preverbale) e sul fatto che il solo CL non possa marcare le referenze indefinita specifica e generica al contrario di Num+CL. L’ipotesi è tuttavia contraddetta da casi come i seguenti (da Tao 2005):

i) 光个主席也做不成事。
[Soltanto CL presidente anche fare non riuscire cosa]
Un presidente soltanto non riesce a gestire la cosa.

ii) 你们不知道当个女人有多么难!
[Voi non sapere essere CL donna esserci quanto difficile]
Voi non sapete quanto sia difficile essere una donna!

iii) 有件事要跟你说说。
[Esserci CL cosa dovere con te dire dire]
Devo dirti una cosa.

L’esempio in i) dimostra che B può comparire in posizione preverbale (anche se, essendo un clitico, il CL deve essere preceduto da un altro elemento) e che può marcare la referenza generica, come evidente anche in ii). La frase in iii), invece, mostra che anche il solo CL può marcare una referenza specifica, essendo l’evento che il parlante deve riferire necessariamente a lui noto.

4 Secondo Peyraube, 一 *yī* + CL era sporadicamente impiegato sin dalla dinastia Han con il significato di «“whatever” entity of the same kind (“a”)» (2000, p. 8).

si esclude quindi il semplice calco linguistico o una motivazione puramente stilistica. Quali sono allora le ragioni che sottendono alla scelta di un nome modificato da (一 *yī*) + CL, quando l’alternativa di un ØSN è sempre disponibile nel contesto delle frasi copulative in cinese? E la costruzione (一 *yī*) + CL ha un uso paragonabile all’articolo indefinito delle lingue europee che ne dispongono?

3 (一 *yī*) + CL e l’articolo indefinito

Il cinese è considerato una lingua priva di articoli (Norman 1988, p. 160; Li, Thompson 1981, p. 131; Yip, Rimmington 1998, p. 7 tra gli altri) e nonostante la funzione di marca nominale indefinita di (一 *yī*) + CL sia stata evidenziata già da tempo dai linguisti cinesi (Wang [1943] 1985; Lü [1944] 1984; Chao 1968), nessun autore accorda ancora alla costruzione numerale il pieno status di articolo. Tuttavia, (一 *yī*) + CL sembra aver subito un processo di grammaticalizzazione che gli permette di marcare non solo nomi indefiniti, ma anche nomi non referenziali come i SN che seguono la copula,[5] in contrasto con l’affermazione di Li e Thompson, secondo i quali i nomi non referenziali non si accompagnano mai in cinese alla Num+CL (1981, p. 130).

L’articolo indefinito nasce dal numerale ‘uno’ in tutte le lingue dove compare (Heine 1997, p. 71), ma esso si differenzia dal numerale perché è «a morphological device [...] with the **primary function** to denote the indefiniteness of noun phrases» (Schroeder 2006, p. 555, evidenziazione nostra), mentre il numerale «encodes additional lexical content expressing its contrast with the other numerals» (Lyons 1999, p. 95). Nelle lingue dove la differenza funzionale non presenta una corrispondente differenziazione fonologica, morfologica o di posizione sintattica, come in cinese, è difficile distinguere tra le due funzioni della stessa forma, ma si può testare il livello di grammaticalizzazione del numerale verificandone la possibilità di occorrere nei contesti individuati da Heine (1997, pp. 71-73) come i cinque stadi dell’evoluzione in articolo indefinito. Nell’ultimo stadio della grammaticalizzazione, l’articolo «generalizzato» (Heine 1997) o «esteso» (Schroeder 2006) ha la possibilità di marcare sia tutti i nomi indefiniti che i nomi non referenziali. La desemantizzazione che accompagna il processo di grammaticalizzazione prevede la perdita, da parte del numerale, prima

5 Con Schroeder (2006), Chen (1987), Li (2000) e altri si considerano non referenziali i nomi indicanti qualità o status che non individuano un partecipante del discorso anche qualora siano preceduti da un articolo o dalla Num+CL. Si considera infatti «referenza» l’atto linguistico che instaura un legame tra il SN e un’entità extralinguistica, legame che in questi contesti manca, anche quando il nome è determinato dall’articolo o dalla Num+CL.

del suo valore di quantificazione e poi della funzione referenziale, cosicché nell’ultimo stadio di sviluppo «only genericity/connotation survives» (Heine 1997, p. 75).

Chen (2003, p. 1171) dimostra la possibilità di (一 *yī*) + CL di occorrere in tutti gli stadi di sviluppo identificati da Heine:

Stadio I: numerale
4) 这件事不难办，我只要一个钟头就够了。
[Questa CL cosa non difficile fare, io soltanto servire uno CL ora allora bastare MOD]
Questa cosa è facile da fare, mi basta un’ora.

Stadio II: uso presentativo
5) 一架飞机从我们头上飞了过去。
[Uno CL aereo da noi testa sopra volare ASP passare-andare]
Un aereo è passato in volo sopra le nostre teste.

Stadio III: marca di referenza indefinita specifica
6) 他去年买了(一)幢房子。
[Lui scorso anno compare ASP (uno) CL casa]
L’anno scorso si è comprato una casa.

Stadio IV: marca di referenza indefinita non specifica
7) 他想买(一)幢房子，什么房子都行。
[Lui volere comprare (uno) CL casa, qualsiasi casa tutti andare-bene]
Vuole comprarsi una casa, di qualsiasi tipo.

Stadio V: uso non referenziale
8) 他是(一)个买卖人。
[Lui essere (uno) CL uomo-d’affari]
È un uomo d’affari.

Anche 一 *yī* + CL pare quindi aver subito un processo di grammaticalizzazione che non si è qui in grado di illustrare dal punto di vista diacronico, ma che non è un prodotto dell’europeizzazione essendo tutti e cinque gli stadi rappresentati nel vecchio *baihua*.[6]

Come per l’articolo indefinito, si osserva anche in cinese una progressiva desemantizzazione che riduce (一 *yī*) + CL nell’ultimo stadio soltanto a una marca che delimita e specifica un’estensione concreta del contenuto intensionale del nome (cioè un’entità della classe che incarna le proprietà

6 Si confrontino gli esempi sull’uso di (一 *yī*) + 个 *gè* tratti dai romanzi classici in Lü ([1944] 1984).

astratte denotate dal lessema), ma che si realizza solo a livello testuale senza ancorarsi al mondo extralinguistico ed è quindi compatibile con nomi non referenziali (Korzen 1996, p. 44). Si registrano anche i fenomeni tipici che caratterizzano il processo di grammaticalizzazione, cioè l'erosione fonetica e la perdita di autonomia prosodica con conseguente cliticizzazione. La collocazione delle parentesi negli esempi 4)-8) mostra come la possibilità di ridurre la Num+CL al solo CL aumenti con il crescere del livello di desemantizzazione e l'attenuazione della referenzialità del nome: 一 *yī* non può essere omesso quando è accentato e semanticamente ancora un pieno quantificatore come in 4), mentre in 5), dove non ha più valenza numerale, pur non potendo essere eliminato, non è più accentato; il suo peso fonologico diminuisce ulteriormente da 6) a 8), al punto che 7), dove il nome ha una referenza non specifica, e 8), dove non è referenziale, sono più naturali con la sua omissione (Chen 2003, p. 1172). Questo può spiegare perché l'estensione dell'uso di 一 *yī*, per effetto dell'europeizzazione, anche in casi come 6)-8) dove la Num+CL ha già subito un processo di riduzione fonologica, abbia prodotto frasi ritenute innaturali.

Quanto illustrato, pur non esaurendo la discussione sullo status di articolo indefinito di (一 *yī*) + CL, dimostra perlomeno una sua affinità con gli articoli indefiniti che consente un confronto del SN postverbale nelle frasi copulative con lingue che presentano un sistema di articoli.

4 Confronto tra l'uso dell'articolo indefinito e l'uso di (一 *yī*) + CL nelle frasi copulative

L'uso dell'articolo nelle frasi copulative delle lingue europee è molto complesso e diversificato. In inglese, *a/an*, citato da Schroeder come il tipico esempio di articolo generalizzato (2006, p. 559), marca di norma il nome che segue la copula, mentre in altre lingue la presenza dell'articolo è più o meno sensibile a certe caratteristiche del nome che accompagna o al tipo di predicazione. Ci si limita qui a rilevare alcune tendenze per metterle a confronto con l'uso di (一 *yī*) + CL, sottolineando però che non si tratta di regolarità categoriche, bensì variabili, verosimilmente perché il livello di grammaticalizzazione dell'articolo è diverso nelle varie lingue ed è un processo in evoluzione in una stessa lingua.

In generale, l'uso di ØSN nelle frasi copulative attiva l'intensione del nome, cioè il suo contenuto concettuale, le proprietà astratte e neutre espresse dal lessema. Tali proprietà vengono attribuite al referente soggetto in un tipo di descrizione qualificante simile a quella di un aggettivo. L'articolo, invece, permette al nome di estendere la sua categorialità astratta in un'entità concreta portatrice di tutte le proprietà e valori della classe che il lessema denota. In questo secondo caso il soggetto viene descritto come

individuo appartenente a una classe di portatori delle proprietà espresse dalla testa del SN predicativo. Nei seguenti esempi (Schwarze 2009, p. 120):

9) a) Che mestiere fa Luigi? È pittore.
b) Ma chi è questo Luigi? È un pittore.

la frase in a) è parafrasabile con «Luigi dipinge, fa il pittore», mentre in b) si individua il soggetto come uno degli elementi appartenenti alla classe dei pittori di cui si suppone abbia le caratteristiche e di conseguenza presenti un certo comportamento. A questo diverso tipo di predicazione si può ricondurre la tendenza dell'articolo a marcare il nome nei seguenti casi:

a) attribuzione di proprietà stabili

In italiano e in altre lingue europee, quando il SN soggetto è individuato come un membro portatore delle proprietà di una classe, generalmente la predicazione comporta un'attribuzione di proprietà considerate più stabili e durature, mentre nel caso di ØSN, la predicazione ha un carattere accidentale, legato a un certo momento (Kupferman 1991; Korzen 1996; Munn, Schmitt 2005). Nella frase seguente, infatti, in cui i costituenti circostanziali limitano la predicazione a un certo tempo e luogo, il SN modificato dall'articolo è escluso:

10) Ora Marco è *un medico a Bari.

Di conseguenza, i nomi che possono occorrere senza articolo nelle frasi copulative sono in varie lingue limitati alle classi che indicano sottogruppi socio-culturali come professioni, ruoli, religione, provenienza geografica, che denotano attività o proprietà contingenti e mutabili, mentre nomi che si riferiscono a sottogruppi naturali di individui con caratteristiche intrinseche e immutabili richiedono la presenza dell'articolo:

11) a) Carlo è ingegnere.
b) Fido è *(un) cane.

Il cinese non sembra sensibile a questa distinzione e anzi, al contrario dell'italiano, il nome che in posizione postverbale individua caratteristiche intrinseche e immutabili del soggetto compare più spesso come ØSN:

12) 鲸鱼是哺乳动物。
[Balena essere mammifero]
La balena è un mammifero.

13) 小白是狗。
[Xiao Bai essere cane]
Xiao Bai è un cane.

b) interpretazione stativa della predicazione

Con nomi che attribuiscono proprietà interpretabili sia come costanti che temporanee l'italiano tende a marcare l'interpretazione stativa e duratura con l'articolo e a esprimere con ØSN quella dinamica, che indica uno stadio temporaneo dell'evoluzione:

14) a) Giorgio è un uomo, Luca è un bambino.
b) Quando Giorgio si è fatto uomo, Luca era ancora bambino.
c) *Luca è bambino, non puoi pretendere che si comporti come uomo.

Se in l'italiano la presenza o assenza dell'articolo in questi casi non è rigidamente codificata,[7] in danese, per esempio, l'uso dell'articolo è ammesso solo per predicazioni con tratti costanti e duraturi (Korzen 1996, p. 328).

In cinese, l'alternativa tra ØSN e il nome preceduto da (一 *yī*) + CL non appare influenzata dall'opposizione permanente/temporaneo, come dimostra l'alternanza delle due forme nei seguenti esempi in cui avverbi e particelle (sottopuntati) specificano la predicazione come uno stato temporaneo:

15) a) 别看 73 岁了，其实还是孩子呢。(da web[8])
[Non guardare 73 anni MOD, in realtà ancora essere bambino MOD]
Anche se ha già 73 anni, in realtà è ancora bambino.

b) 他说，她有点象晓晴，还是个孩子。(Zhu Wen 1994)
[Lui dire lei un po' assomigliare Xiaoqing, ancora essere CL bambino]
Lui dice che lei assomiglia un po' a Xiaoqing, è ancora una bambina.

7 In 14 b), infatti, l'interpretazione dinamica non esclude la possibilità di inserire l'articolo davanti al nome «bambino».

8 http://www.oldkids.cn/blog/blog_con.php?blogid=348130 (2014-09-27)

c) predicazione soggettiva

Con i nomi che indicano professioni, ruoli e simili, il ØSN predica uno status mutabile ma oggettivo e verificabile. Si tratta quindi di una predicazione neutra che in italiano ammette l'uso dell'articolo senza effetti sull'oggettività della proposizione (in 9 a), infatti, è ammessa la presenza dell'articolo). In altre lingue europee, invece, l'inserimento dell'articolo attribuisce un forte tratto valutativo:

16) a) Er ist Dichter.
[Lui è poeta]
Lui è poeta.

b) Er ist ein Dichter.
[Lui è un poeta]
Lui è un poeta.

In a) la predicazione è neutra e afferma oggettivamente lo status del soggetto, mentre b) presenta una coloritura soggettiva in base alla quale la frase viene interpretata come se il soggetto si atteggiasse a poeta, ma non lo fosse o lo fosse solo temporaneamente (Schroeder 2006, p. 559). Seppur in modo più sottile, il legame con la valutazione soggettiva si rileva anche in nederlandese, dove la presenza dell'articolo è associata a elementi che introducono il punto di vista del parlante, come ad esempio verbi di opinione (Dik 1997, p. 203).

La sensibilità dell'articolo alla componente soggettiva e valutativa si rivela anche nel caso di una serie di nomi, come 'mascalzone', 'burlone' ecc., che Kupferman (1991, p. 69) e Munn, Schmitt (2005, p. 848) escludono dalla possibilità di comparire come ØSN perché, a differenza dei nomi di professione e simili, non indicano classi stabilmente costituite e definite, ma un insieme di proprietà stereotipate attribuibili in base a un giudizio soggettivo. Questa tendenza, dimostrata da Kupferman (1991) e Munn, Schmitt (2005) per il francese e da Schroeder (2006) per il tedesco, si registra anche in italiano:

17) Carlo è *(un) mascalzone.

Si può supporre che l'unico modo di attribuire le proprietà espresse da questi nomi che non rappresentano classi oggettivamente costituite sia individuare con l'articolo un prototipo che le incarni. È logico quindi che l'articolo sia necessariamente presente anche con nomi interpretati metaforicamente:

18) a) Luca è macellaio.
b) Luca è un macellaio.

In 18) sia a) che b) possono indicare la professione di Luca, ma solo b) concede l'interpretazione spregiativa. Quando b) ha questa seconda interpretazione, Luca viene individuato come membro di una classe a cui oggettivamente non appartiene, ma della quale soggettivamente gli si attribuiscono certe caratteristiche. Infine, in italiano, come nella maggior parte delle lingue europee, la presenza di un determinante descrittivo, che spesso esprime un giudizio del parlante, impone la presenza dell'articolo:

19) Lui è *(un) ingegnere famoso.

In cinese, la presenza di (一 *yī*) + CL non porta a un'interpretazione valutativa, come si è visto in 2) e 3). Tuttavia si nota che in contesti neutri, dove viene semplicemente dichiarata la professione o lo status del soggetto (per esempio nella risposta alla domanda «Che lavoro fa?»), l'uso di (一 *yī*) + CL è considerato inappropriato (Liu, Pan, Gu 2001, p. 147).

Con nomi che non denotano classi stabilmente costituite, nomi usati metaforicamente o preceduti da determinanti descrittivi, diversamente dalle lingue europee in cinese non è richiesta la presenza di (一 *yī*) + CL, anche se molti autori (Zhang, Li 2002, Tang 2005, Li 2000) notano una marcata tendenza al suo impiego in tutti i contesti di questo tipo:

20) 他是(个)流氓。(da web[9])
[Lui essere teppista]
È un teppista.

21) 店主是粗人，这方面二五眼。(da Tang 2005)
[Negozio proprietario essere rozzo-uomo, questo aspetto incompetente]
Il proprietario del negozio è uno zoticone, assolutamente incompetente su questo.

22) 所有人的心头都闪过五个字：他是个恶魔。(da web[10])
[Tutti persona ST mente tutti balenare cinque CL carattere: lui essere CL demone.]
Nella mente di tutti balenarono tre parole: è un demone.

9 Il CL è posto tra parentesi perché la frase è stata rilevata sia con l'elemento postverbale realizzato come ØSN (http://tieba.baidu.com/p/3272475716) sia preceduto dal CL (http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/169161839.html) (2014-09-27).

10 http://www.baishulou.net/read/13/13559/6380368.html (2014-09-27).

23) 居里夫人是世界上著名科学家。(da Liu, Pan, Gu 2001)
[Curie signora essere mondo su famoso scienziato]
Madame Curie è una scienziata di fama mondiale.[11]

Dal confronto tra l’uso dell’articolo indefinito e di (一 *yī*) + CL nelle frasi copulative emerge quindi che le regolarità, seppur non piene, rilevate nell’italiano e/o in altre lingue europee non sembrano valere per il cinese, dove in nessun caso la costruzione numerale è obbligatoria. In cinese è sempre possibile mettere in relazione un SN soggetto con un ØSN che in funzione predicativa descrive il primo, attribuendogli le proprietà della classe che denota, sia essa socialmente definita o non definita, denotante caratteristiche intrinseche o accidentali, durature o temporanee. Avendo quindi la libertà di usare sempre il ØSN, si presume che la scelta del parlante di marcare il SN postverbale con la Num+CL sia legata a ragioni pragmatiche.

5 La funzione pragmatica di (一 *yī*) + CL

Le frasi copulative non hanno la funzione di introdurre un partecipante nel discorso o di riportare un evento, quindi, in base all’analisi delle categorie lessicali di Hopper e Thompson (1984, p. 709), il nome che compare in posizione postverbale presenta una bassa categorialità e si accompagna a un verbo a sua volta a bassa categorialità. Questo è particolarmente evidente in cinese, dove il ØSN postverbale può ricorrere in funzione predicativa senza l’ausilio della copula, ammettendo anche la modificazione avverbiale:

24) 鲁迅浙江人。(da Cang 2007)
[Lu Xun Zhejiang-uomo]
Lu Xun è del Zhejiang.

25) 别看他年龄不大，早博士了。(da Cang 2007)
[Non guardare lui età non grande, presto dottore MOD]
Anche se è giovane, è già dottore da un pezzo.

11 Su alcuni siti internet sono stati rilevati contesti molto simili in cui il CL è presente. Per esempio in http://www.chinanews.com/cul/2014/08-28/6539857.shtml (2014-09-27) si legge:
里夫人不仅是一位伟大的科学家，更是一名意志坚强的女性。
[Curie signora non solo essere uno CL grande ST scienziato, di-più essere uno CL volontà forte ST donna]
Madame Curie non fu soltanto un’eminente scienziata, ma ancor più una donna di grande determinazione.

Secondo Hopper e Thompson questi nomi tuttavia possono accrescere la loro categorialità e quindi accompagnarsi con gli elementi morfosintattici, tra i quali l’articolo, tipici del nome qualora abbiano una particolare rilevanza. In riferimento alle due diverse forme di frasi copulative in 26)

26 a) 他是干部。
[Lui essere quadro]
Lui è quadro (di partito).

b) 他是一个干部。
[Lui essere uno CL quadro]
Lui è un quadro.

i due autori (1984, p. 716) sostengono che b) è impiegata in alternativa ad a) quando il parlante intende usare il nome per proseguire il discorso sulle caratteristiche che esso individua, nel caso specifico con una discussione sul ruolo del quadro. Pur non potendo parlare di continuità tematica, poiché le frasi copulative non introducono un partecipante del discorso che possa entrare in una catena tematica, il parlante sceglierebbe di marcare il SN postverbale con (一 *yī*) + CL per sottolinearne la rilevanza nel discorso che segue.

In realtà, quest’ipotesi non sembra sostenuta da una regolarità significativa e la presenza o meno della Num+CL non pare influire sulla possibilità di far riferimento alle caratteristiche evocate dal nome nel discorso. Si considerino i seguenti esempi:

27) 寿明忙问：“您的朋友贵姓？”
那人说：“姓鲍，是<u>个库兵</u>。他叫您告诉乌大爷，有位聂师傅被九爷传走了，吉凶不明。
聂师傅临走嘱咐一件事，叫乌大爷千万把他的手艺传下去。”(da Tang 2005)
[Shouming affrettarsi chiedere: «Lei ST amico onorevole cognome?»
Quello uomo dire: «Cognome Bao, essere CL guardia-del-tesoro. Lui far-sì-che Lei informare Wu grande-vecchio, esserci CL Nie maestro PAS nove zio chiamare andare ASP, buono cattivo non chiaro. Nie maestro sul-punto-di partire raccomandare uno CL cosa, far-sì-che Wu grande-vecchio assolutamente BA lui ST arte tramandare scendere-andare»]
Shouming s’affrettò a chiedere: «Come si chiama il Suo amico?»
Quello rispose: «Si chiama Bao, è una guardia del tesoro nazionale. Vuole che Lei informi il signor Wu che un certo maestro Nie è stato convocato dal Nono signore. Non si sa se questo sia un buono o cattivo segno. Giusto prima di andarsene il maestro Nie ha raccomandato di far sì che il signor Wu tramandi la sua arte.»

28) 肖元元说，我怎么啦？我做了什么坏事？你<u>是老师</u>，说话要负责任。(da Tang 2005)

[Xiao Yuanyuan dire, io come MOD? Io fare ASP quale cattiva cosa? Tu essere insegnante, parlare dovere portare responsabilità]
Che cosa hai da dire di me? disse Xiao Yuanyuan, che cosa ho fatto di male? Sei un professore, devi essere responsabile di quello che dici.

In 27) il SN postverbale è modificato dalla costruzione numerale, ma il discorso che segue non verte sul ruolo o le caratteristiche relative alla qualifica che esprime. Al contrario in 28), nonostante il nome «professore» sia un ØSN, la frase è seguita da un commento su una caratteristica ritenuta distintiva della classe insegnante.

L’affermazione di Hopper e Thompson, tuttavia, riflette un principio consolidato, espresso da Givón come Principio di quantità, secondo il quale più un’informazione è importante o meno prevedibile maggiore è la quantità di caratterizzazione linguistica nell’espressione del suo referente. Quindi è giusto supporre che l’uso di (一 *yī*) + CL indichi una salienza del referente, anche quando questo non è ripreso nel discorso.

Indagando in questa direzione, Li (2000) ipotizza che la costruzione numerale abbia un’importante funzione nel *grounding* dell’informazione, dimostrando che i referenti indefiniti marcati dalla Num+CL in frasi non copulative sono messi in rilievo dal parlante per vivacizzare o intensificare la descrizione, anche quando non entrano in catene tematiche. I dati di Li rilevano infatti che la Num+CL determina soprattutto nomi in frasi presentative o eventive di primo piano nella narrazione, confermando quindi che essa tende ad accompagnare gli elementi ritenuti più salienti nel discorso. Nel caso dei nomi non referenziali nelle frasi copulative, Li invece dimostra l’effetto di *foregrounding* soltanto in base alla quantità di materiale linguistico di codifica, evidenziando come la Num+CL appaia generalmente in SN accompagnati da determinanti descrittivi e citando esempi, in realtà molto marginali, in cui addirittura due occorrenze di (一 *yī*) + CL sono riferite al nome sul quale il parlante pone particolare enfasi.

La presenza di determinanti descrittivi non è tuttavia sufficiente a spiegare tutti i casi in cui (一 *yī*) + CL compare nelle frasi copulative. Si concorda pienamente sul fatto che la scelta di marcare il nome dipenda dalla salienza che il parlante gli attribuisce, ma si vorrebbe dare a essa un contenuto più preciso che permetta di prevedere, almeno in parte, i contesti in cui questa scelta viene operata.

5.1 (一 *yī*) + CL come marca di soggettività

La percezione di salienza da parte del parlante può essere legata alla sua partecipazione emotiva e al suo giudizio nella predicazione. Nella breve analisi sull'uso dell'articolo indefinito si è già evidenziato come la componente soggettiva influisca, almeno in parte, sul suo impiego: la presenza dell'articolo, infatti, è generalmente richiesta davanti a nomi che non indicano classi oggettivamente definite, nomi usati metaforicamente o modificati da determinanti descrittivi, ossia nomi non neutri che implicano una presa di posizione soggettiva. Per quanto riguarda i nomi di professione, ruoli o simili, l'attribuzione di queste proprietà attraverso il ØSN è un'oggettiva registrazione della realtà, contingente e momentanea ma verificabile, che non comporta per il parlante la stessa responsabilità di giudizio richiesta quando, con l'uso dell'articolo, identifica in modo più duraturo e stabile il soggetto con un membro-prototipo della classe, che incarna tutte le caratteristiche e i comportamenti che la definiscono.

Le stesse considerazioni sulla componente soggettiva si possono fare per la Num+CL, dal momento che anche in cinese, come si è visto, si registra una marcata tendenza all'uso di (一 *yī*) + CL con nomi dotati di un tratto [+valutativo] o modificati da determinanti nominali (Zhang, Li 2002), e che la costruzione numerale è ritenuta ridondante qualora la predicazione sia una neutra e oggettiva attribuzione di un ruolo, professione o status. Si può dunque supporre che anche in cinese l'uso (一 *yī*) + CL marchi la predicazione come espressione di una presa di posizione del parlante (o del personaggio di cui il parlante riferisce il pensiero) che associa al soggetto tutte le proprietà incarnate dal nome individualizzato dalla Num+CL.

L'ipotesi trova sostegno nel fatto che nei contesti in cui compare (一 *yī*) + CL si verifica con una significativa regolarità la co-occorrenza di altri elementi che connotano la predicazione come soggettiva o che perlomeno escludono la sua oggettività.

5.1.1 Co-occorrenza di (一 *yī*) + CL con indicatori di soggettività

Zhang e Li (2002, p. 67) rilevano la co-occorrenza di (一 *yī*) + CL con elementi frasali indicanti soggettività nell'85% delle frasi copulative contenute nel romanzo di Lao She *Cammello Xiangzi*. I dati dei due autori sono stati qui verificati e confermati attraverso l'analisi di altri testi dello stesso autore, di testi di scrittori contemporanei e di esempi tratti dal web, per escludere, per quanto possibile, che la tendenza attestata sia espressione soltanto di un certo registro, stile individuale o periodo temporale.

Gli elementi frasali individuati (sottopuntati negli esempi) sono i seguenti:

Verbi di sentimento, di opinione o espressioni che indicano soggettività:

29) 老者又细细看了祥子一番, 觉得他绝不是个匪类。(Lao She [1936] 2003)
[Vecchio ancora attento attento guardare ASP Xiangzi uno CL, sentire lui assolutamente non essere CL bandito]
Il vecchio scrutò ancora una volta Xiangzi con attenzione e pensò che non fosse assolutamente un bandito.

30) 老头儿没这么想过；世界便是个土堆，要什么得慢慢的去拨开土儿找，还不一定找得到。(Lao She [1934] 1980)
[Vecchio non così pensare ASP; mondo proprio essere CL terra cumulo, volere qualcosa dovere pian piano ST andare muovere aprire terra cercare, ancor non sicuramente trovare ASP arrivare]
Il vecchio non l’aveva mai pensata in questo modo: il mondo non era che un cumulo di terra, se si vuole qualcosa, si deve scavare pian piano nella terra e cercarlo, ma non è detto che lo si trovi.

31) 在父亲的眼里，叶莲子再不是那个瘦弱的乡下小姑娘而是个成年妇女了。(Zhang Jie 2001)
[In padre ST occhio dentro, Ye Lianzi ancora non essere quello CL magro debole ST campagna piccola ragazza ma essere CL adulto donna MOD]
Agli occhi del padre, Ye Lianzi non era più la ragazzina di campagna magra ed emaciata, ma si era fatta donna.

Elementi che indicano supposizione, ipotesi e verbi o avverbi che esprimono verosimiglianza:

32) 假若祥子想再娶,她是个理想的人。(Lao She [1936] 2003)
[Se Xiangzi pensare di nuovo sposare, lei essere CL ideale ST donna]
Se Xiangzi avesse voluto risposarsi, lei avrebbe dovuto essere una donna ideale.

33) 他似乎既是个成人, 又是个孩子, 非常有趣。(Lao She [1936] 2003)
[Lui come se sia essere CL adulto, sia essere CL bambino, molto divertente]
Gli sembrava di essere un adulto e nello stesso tempo ancora un ragazzo, e la cosa lo divertiva molto.

34) 卡扎菲到底是好人还是坏人？ 如果他是个好人，为啥他的人民不帮他呢？(da web[12])
[Kazhafei in fin dei conti essere brava-persona o cattiva-persona? Se lui essere CL brava-persona, per che cosa lui ST popolo non aiutare lui MOD?]
Alla fin fine, Gheddafi è buono o cattivo? Se è una brava persona, perché il suo popolo non lo aiuta?

Determinanti descrittivi:

35) 什么也不会，自己只是一个傻大黑粗的废物。(Lao She [1936] 2003)
[Qualsiasi-cosa anche non riuscire, se stesso solo essere uno CL impacciato nero rozzo ST buonannulla]
Non sapeva far niente di niente, era solo un grande e stupido buonannulla.

36) 他原来不过是个连小水筒也不如的人。(Lao She [1936] 2003)
[Lui originariamente soltanto essere CL persino piccolo acqua latta anche non come ST persona]
Lui valeva ancora meno di un secchio d’acqua.

Nomi con un tratto intrinseco [+valutativo]

Ci si riferisce in particolare a composti coesi formati da una testa nominale, a volte costituita da un nome usato metaforicamente, preceduta da un modificatore generalmente aggettivale che esprime qualità:

37) 刘四晓得不晓得他女儿是个破货呢？(Lao She [1936] 2003)
[Liu Si sapere non sapere lui figlia essere uno CL rotto-merce MOD?]
Lo sa Liu Si che sua figlia è una sgualdrina?

38) 陈清扬说，我始终是一个恶棍。(Wang Xiaobo 1997)
[Chen Qingyang dire, io inizio-fine essere uno CL cattivo-bastone]
Chen Qingyang diceva che ero un farabutto fatto e finito.

12 http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/310012704.html (2014/09/27)

Infine, coerentemente, il SN postverbale tende a non essere modificato da (一 *yī*) + CL quando nella frase compaiono invece elementi avverbiali o d'altro tipo che indicano certezza e oggettività:

39) 他究竟是乡下人，不像城里人那样听见风便是雨。(Lao She [1936] 2003)
[Lui alla fine essere campagnolo, non come cittadino così ascoltare sentire vento subito essere pioggia]
Lui in fin dei conti era un campagnolo, non così pronto a prevedere i pericoli come la gente di città.

40) 本来是干儿子，再作女婿，反正差不很多。(Lao She [1936] 2003)
[Originariamente essere figlio-adottivo, in-più fare genero, comunque mancare non molto tanto]
Sei già suo figlio adottivo, diventare anche suo genero non ti cambierà di molto la vita.

5.1.2 Considerazioni

L'associazione tra l'uso di (一 *yī*) + CL e una marcatura soggettiva della predicazione è sostenuta dai dati[13] e permette di dare un contenuto più specifico a quella salienza dell'elemento postverbale preceduto da Num+CL giustamente rilevata da Hopper, Thompson (1986) e Li (2000). Rende inoltre conto della prevalente assenza di (一 *yī*) + CL quando si attribuisce al soggetto l'appartenenza a una classe naturale e stabile, come negli esempi 12) e 13), e della maggiore naturalezza dell'uso di ØSN quando si afferma la propria o l'altrui professione, ruolo o altro in un contesto neutro, dal momento che in entrambi i casi si tratta di predicazioni in cui non interviene la componente soggettiva.

Si sottolinea tuttavia che gli elementi lessicali individuati da Zhang, Li (2002) non impongono l'uso di (一 *yī*) + CL. Si consideri, per esempio, la sua co-occorrenza con un modificatore descrittivo: sebbene l'inserimento della Num+Cl in questi casi sia una tendenza attestata, il determinante non ne richiede necessariamente l'uso, come si è visto in 23), ma è spesso l'assetto semantico complessivo della frase che ne determina la presenza o assenza, come dimostrano le frasi in 41). Sia in a) che in b) il nome

13 Una conferma empirica è il fatto che nella traduzione dal giapponese (lingua che non ammette mai la presenza del corrispondente della costruzione numerale cinese nelle frasi copulative) in cinese, se la predicazione nel testo originale ha una coloritura soggettiva data da verbi di sentimento, opinione, forme ipotetiche, particelle modali che indicano la posizione del parlante, i traduttori cinesi e taiwanesi generalmente inseriscono (一 *yī*) + CL davanti al SN postverbale, come dimostrano i numerosi esempi riportati in Xiao (2007, pp. 29-33).

postverbale è preceduto da un determinante descrittivo, costituito, oltretutto, dallo stesso lessema了不得 *liǎobude* «straordinario», ma solo in b) compare la Num+CL:

41) a) 世界上的人虽多，但是自家添人进口到底是了不得的事。
(Lao She [1943]1980)
[Mondo sopra ST persona sebbene numeroso, ma propria famiglia aggiungere persona entrare bocca in fin dei conti essere straordinario ST cosa]
Anche se al mondo di gente ce n'è tanta, aumentare i membri della propria famiglia è pur sempre una cosa straordinaria.

b) 我对自己说，好像那是一个了不得的发现似的。(Zhu Wen 1995)
[Io a stesso dire, sembrare quello essere uno CL straordinario ST scoperta simile]
Mi dissi che quella sembrava essere una scoperta straordinaria.

Il giudizio del parlante espresso dal modificatore, infatti, può essere presentato come soggettivo od oggettivo nel contesto generale della frase. Ciò spiega l'esclusione della Num+CL in a), dove l'affermazione si riferisce alla gioia dell'arrivo di un figlio, considerata ed espressa come una realtà di fatto oggettiva sottolineata dall'avverbio 到底 *dàodǐ* «alla fin fine»; in b), invece, la Num+CL è inserita perché gli elementi contestuali (mi dissi, sembrava) caratterizzano la predicazione come una valutazione del parlante.

Neppure i nomi con un tratto intrinseco [+valutativo] richiedono necessariamente la presenza della Num+CL, nonostante la loro tendenza ad accompagnarsi a essa sia così marcata che Zhang e Li (2002, p. 63) dubitano dell'accettabilità delle frasi in cui (一 *yī*) + CL non compare. In realtà ØSN non è escluso,come dimostrano i seguenti esempi:

42) 所以她简直不明白，人们为什么要说她是破鞋。(Wang Xiaobo 1997)
[Perciò lei semplicemente non capire, persone perché volere dire lei essere rotta-scarpa]
Perciò non capiva assolutamente perché la gente dicesse che era una zoccola.

43) 陈白露:可怜, 达生, 你真是个书呆子。你以为这些名誉的人物弄来的钱就是名誉的么?
(da Tang 2005)
[Chen Bailu: povero, Dasheng, tu davvero essere CL topo-di-biblioteca. Tu pensare questo CL onorevole ST personaggio fare venire ST soldi proprio essere onorevole NOM MOD?]
Chen Bailu: Povero Dasheng, sei davvero un topo da biblioteca. Pensi

che i soldi che questi onorevoli personaggi guadagnano siano soldi onorevoli?

44) 寿明说道:“你可真是书呆子!”(da Tang 2005)
[Shouming dire: «Tu proprio davvero essere topo-di-biblioteca!»]
Shouming disse: «Sei davvero un topo da biblioteca!»

Il confronto in particolare tra gli esempi 42) e 37) e 43) e 44), che contengono quasi gli stessi lessemi in assetti semantico-sintattici pressoché identici, rende alquanto arduo o addirittura impossibile giustificare, al di fuori di un contesto più ampio, l’alternanza tra ØSN e (一 *yī*) + CL + N. Questo tuttavia non inficia l’ipotesi, ma conferma che il ØSN è la forma base del SN postverbale, neutra rispetto alla posizione del parlante nei confronti della predicazione e quindi generalmente sempre possibile. L’inserimento di (一 *yī*) + CL costituisce invece l’alternativa marcata che implica un atto linguistico più complesso: attraverso il CL il parlante attiva, come afferma Sugimura (2006), tutto il mondo culturale associato alla classe denotata dal nome ed equiparando il SN soggetto a un membro individualizzato e assunto come prototipo della classe, attribuisce al soggetto tutte le proprietà che questo membro incarna, non solo quelle oggettive ma anche quelle che appartengono ai propri riferimenti culturali.

Il diverso tipo di predicazione è più evidente nei contesti in cui compaiono entrambe le forme, come nell’esempio che segue:

45) “不是不是”，杜卫东有点儿急，结结巴巴地说，“我，我不是不好意思，我是说我自己，我没脸，不是人，我……在你面前我真不是个人!”
(da Sugimura 2006)
[«Non essere non essere», Du Weidong un po’ agitato, balbettante ST dire, «Io, io non essere imbarazzato, io essere dire io stesso, io non faccia, non essere uomo, io…in tu davanti, io davvero non essere uno CL uomo»]
«No, no» disse balbettando Du Weidong un po’ agitato, «Io, io non è che non mi vergogni, voglio dire che io, io ho perso la faccia, non sono un uomo, io…davanti a te non sono proprio un uomo!»

Negando l’appartenenza del soggetto al genere umano, la prima frase copulativa con ØSN ha di per sé una forte connotazione negativa ed è infatti generalmente usata come offesa. Ma è nella seconda occorrenza che, attraverso l’uso del CL, il parlante attiva l’universo culturale da lui associato al nome «uomo», affermando quindi, con una maggiore partecipazione emotiva sottolineata dall’intensificatore 真 *zhēn* «davvero», di non avere tutte le qualità che fanno di un uomo un uomo (Sugimura 2006, pp. 18-19).

Il contrasto è evidente anche nel seguente esempio, dove compare il verbo copulativo当 *dāng* «essere, fare», e dove il nome preceduto dal CL

ha una referenza generica, che in cinese può essere marcata o non marcata dalla Num+CL:

46) 虽然命运之神好像已经给我安排定了，非让我当工人不可，但我一定要想办法摆脱它！我总觉得，在眼下这个世界里，当个工人，实在是太低贱太没出息了。(da Sugimura 2006)
[Sebbene destino ST dio sembrare già a io pianificare fissare MOD, non far-sì-che io essere operario non potere, ma io di-sicuro volere pensare modo scrollare-di-dosso esso! Io sempre pensare, in occhio sotto questo CL mondo dentro, essere CL operaio, davvero ENF troppo basso, troppo non prospettiva MOD]
Anche se il dio del fato sembra aver già deciso che io non possa fare nient'altro che l'operaio, voglio assolutamente trovare un modo per scrollarmi di dosso questo destino. Sono convinto che al mondo d'oggi essere un operaio sia troppo degradante e senza prospettive.

A differenza della prima, neutra, la seconda occorrenza marcata evoca tutte le connotazioni, in questo caso negative, che il parlante associa al lavoro di operaio. Allo stesso modo nell'esempio che segue:

47) 家里的不是个老婆, 而是个吸人血的妖精！(Lao She [1936]2003)
[Casa dentro NOM non essere CL moglie, ma essere CL succhia uomo sangue ST demone]
Quella che aveva in casa non era una moglie ma un demone succhia sangue!

con l'impiego del CL non si afferma che il soggetto «non era moglie» (ed era invece, per esempio, sorella o zia), ma si sottolinea che non era tutto ciò che il concetto di moglie rappresenta nell'universo culturale del personaggio di cui l'autore riferisce il pensiero.

La scelta del parlante di usare la Num+CL può essere interpretata anche in riferimento alla salienza informativa che egli attribuisce all'elemento postverbale. Frasi come la seguente porterebbero a ipotizzare che (一 *yī*) + CL sia introdotto per marcare l'informazione nuova, mentre ØSN rappresenti l'informazione nota:

48) 老头急道："快上车！今天下午五点钟左右, 在你们单位的东廊下有一个弃婴—那就是你命中注定的儿子！"
"弃婴?"
"听明白, 你今生今世只有这一个儿子。虽然是弃婴, 却是个贵子—不是兔唇, 不是六指儿, 没有任何疾病。" (da Tang 2005)
[Vecchio concitatamente dire: «Subito salire macchina! Oggi pomeriggio cinque ora circa, in voi unità ST oriente portico sotto esserci uno CL trovatello – quello proprio essere tu destino dentro destinare ST figlio!»

«Trovatello?»
«Ascoltare capire, tu questa-vita-questa-epoca soltanto avere questo uno CL figlio. Sebbene essere trovatello, tuttavia essere uno onorevole-figlio – non essere labbro leporino, non essere sei dito, non avere alcuno malattia.»]
Il vecchio disse concitatamente: «Sali subito in macchina. Oggi pomeriggio verso le cinque ci sarà un trovatello sotto il portico orientale della vostra unità di lavoro…quello è il figlio che ti manda il destino!»
«Un trovatello?»
«Ascolta bene, è l'unico figlio che avrai in questa vita. Anche se è un trovatello, è sempre un figlio prezioso…non ha il labbro leporino, non ha sei dita e nessun genere di malattia.»

Il nome «trovatello», preceduto da (一 *yī*) + CL quando viene introdotto per la prima volta nel discorso, si presenta come ØSN nella successiva frase copulativa dove costituisce un'informazione nota. Al contrario, «figlio prezioso», che compare nella seconda frase copulativa, attribuisce al soggetto una caratteristica nuova, e compare marcato dal CL.

Tang (2005, pp. 36-37) tuttavia confuta l'ipotesi di una corrispondenza tra la Num+CL e il valore informativo del SN, dimostrando che sebbene (一 *yī*) + CL tenda a non comparire quando il SN costituisce un'informazione nota, il ØSN non è assolutamente escluso quando convoglia un'informazione nuova. In 49), per esempio, «piccolo cane» veicola in entrambe le occorrenze informazioni nuove rispetto alle due diverse situazioni presentate dalle frasi ipotetiche, ma compare, in apparenza indifferentemente, marcato o non marcato:

49) 这么着吧, 伙计, 我给三十五块钱吧;我要说这不是个便宜, 我是小狗子;我要是能再多拿一块, 也是个小狗子! (Lao She 2003)
[Così MOD, compagno, io dare trentacinque CL soldo MOD; io se dire questo non essere uno CL economico, io essere piccolo cane; io se potere ancora in-più prendere uno CL, anche essere CL piccolo cane]
Facciamo così, amico, ti do trentacinque dollari; se ti dicessi che non è una miseria, sarei un cane, ma se potessi tirar fuori un dollaro in più sarei un cane lo stesso!

In realtà, la diversa forma dei due SN può essere spiegata in termini di salienza informativa se si considera, anziché l'opposizione tra informazione nota e non nota, l'opposizione tra informazione attesa o inattesa in un particolare contesto. Si può supporre che il parlante ricorra all'uso di (一 *yī*) + CL per marcare l'informazione che ritiene non prevedibile, e quindi più saliente, per l'interlocutore. La prima occorrenza di «piccolo cane», infatti, è presentata come un dato scontato, prevedibile nel contesto in base alla

realtà oggettiva e quindi non è marcata; la seconda, in cui si afferma che lo status del soggetto non cambia nonostante il mutare delle circostanze (l'aggiunta di un dollaro), è ritenuta invece dal parlante un'informazione inattesa, la cui salienza è sottolineata con l'uso della Num+CL.

È possibile interpretare in questa luce anche la co-occorrenza della Num+CL con gli elementi frasali individuati da Zhang, Li (2002), elencati nel paragrafo precedente. Per esempio, verbi di opinione o sentimento introducono affermazioni soggettive che l'interlocutore non può prevedere, perciò i SN postverbali delle frasi copulative rette da questi verbi sono preceduti da (一 *yī*) + CL, mentre indicatori di oggettività come gli avverbi 究竟 *jiūjìng* «in fin dei conti» o 本来 *běnlái* «in origine» preannunciano un'informazione prevedibile nel contesto, quindi l'elemento postverbale compare come semplice ØSN.

Molti sono gli elementi che possono influire sulla scelta del parlante che non sempre, quindi, è interpretabile in maniera univoca. Inoltre, l'evoluzione interna di (一 *yī*) + CL, stimolata anche dall'influenza delle lingue straniere (in particolare l'inglese) prima con il contatto indiretto attraverso le traduzioni nel periodo dell'europeizzazione, ora con il sempre maggiore contatto diretto anche nella lingua parlata, oltre a produrre un continuo aumento del suo impiego come marca indefinita in altri contesti sintattici (He 2008; Liu 2010), ha probabilmente opacizzato questa sua funzione. È quindi ipotizzabile che (一 *yī*) + CL entri ora anche in frasi copulative più neutre, forse come semplice strumento per variare la lingua o fors'anche per ragioni prosodiche, per creare cioè, nel caso della più comune e accettata forma ridotta al CL, un piede bisillabico con il verbo monosillabico 是 *shì*. Si ritiene tuttavia che soprattutto nella lingua parlata la differenza pragmatica tra le due forme del SN postverbale sia ancora avvertita e il fatto che il CL generico 个 *gè* sia associato all'affermazione della posizione del parlante è verificabile anche in altri contesti sintattici, come dimostrano, tra gli altri, gli studi di Biq (2004) sull'uso di 个 *gè* in certi costrutti V-CL-O e V-CL-Complemento, dove il classificatore marca rispettivamente la casualità/rilassatezza e, al contrario, l'estremizzazione dell'azione del verbo. Si confronti anche lo studio di Chen (2003) sull'uso di 个 *gè* davanti a SN con referenza definita nella costruzione con 把 *bǎ*, dove il CL marca, secondo l'autore, la volontà del parlante di ridurre la centralità tematica del nome anticipato in posizione preverbale.[14]

14 Il fenomeno, ancora molto discusso, meriterebbe uno studio specifico che esula dalla prospettiva di questo lavoro.

6 Conclusioni

Si è cercato di individuare la funzione di (一 *yī*) + CL quando determina il SN postverbale nelle frasi copulative predicative, dopo avere escluso che il suo uso in alternativa al ØSN sia stato un semplice calco dell'articolo indefinito dovuto al fenomeno dell'europeizzazione. L'europeizzazione ha contribuito all'aumento della forma non ridotta 一 *yī* + CL e ha probabilmente accelerato la sua diffusione come marca indefinita, funzione che deriva però da un processo di grammaticalizzazione precedente.

Sebbene in tale processo (一 *yī*) + CL abbia raggiunto l'ultimo stadio di sviluppo dell'articolo indefinito, la sua presenza nelle frasi copulative non è obbligatoria come lo è invece per *a/an* in inglese e la forma base del SN postverbale rimane ØSN. L'alternanza tra ØSN e (一 *yī*) + CL + N, nonostante la differenza tra le due forme tenda a sfumarsi, non è completamente libera e un'analisi dei contesti dove prevale la forma marcata dimostra che (一 *yī*) + CL è sensibile alla componente soggettiva della predicazione. Si ipotizza che ciò sia legato alla funzione di (一 *yī*) + CL che, individuando un membro della classe espressa dal nome, indica un prototipo al quale il parlante attribuisce tutte le proprietà della classe, da quelle oggettive a quelle che appartengono all'universo culturale che quella classe evoca per lui. La necessità di individuare un prototipo è più forte quando la classe non è stabile e oggettivamente definita, come nel caso dei nomi che presentano un tratto [+valutativo] intrinseco e quando, attraverso un determinante soggettivo del nome, anche una classe oggettivamente definita viene ricategorizzata in una sottoclasse soggettiva. Questo spiega perché linguisti madrelingua considerino di dubbia accettabilità la mancanza della marcatura nel caso di nomi dotati del tratto [+valutativo] e rende conto della forte tendenza di (一 *yī*) + CL a comparire davanti a nomi modificati da determinanti. Legato alla posizione del parlante nei confronti della predicazione è anche il ricorso alla Num+CL per evidenziare quelle informazioni che vengono considerate inattese per l'interlocutore in un dato contesto e quindi più salienti.

Molti di questi comportamenti sono simili a quelli dell'articolo indefinito all'interno delle frasi copulative, perlomeno in alcune di quelle lingue europee dove il suo uso non è obbligatorio come in inglese. Sorge quindi spontanea la domanda se (一 *yī*) + CL possa essere considerato un articolo indefinito a pieno titolo. Oltre alle affinità con l'articolo nella funzione semantico-pragmatica che svolge nelle frasi copulative, dal punto di vista distribuzionale (一 *yī*) + CL sembra aver ampliato ulteriormente il suo uso come articolo generalizzato, potendo precedere anche nomi plurali[15] e nomi di massa, nonché ricategorizzare nomi propri come nomi comuni:

15 In realtà, l'uso di 个 *gè* davanti a nomi plurali in frasi copulative era già stato rilevato da Lü (1984, pp. 159-160) nel cinese pre-moderno.

50) 排在第四和第五的也是很受爱好的一个学校。 (da Liu 2010)
[Allineare stare quarto e quinto NOM anche ENF molto ricevere amore ST uno CL scuola]
Anche la quarta e la quinta classificata sono scuole molto amate.

51) 我去喝个水。(da Biq 2004)
[Io andare bere CL acqua]
Vado a bere un'acqua.

52) 你会看到一个华鑫银行。(da Liu 2010)
[Tu potere guardare arrivare uno CL Huaxin banca]
Vedrai una (filiale della) Banca Huaxin.

Rimangono tuttavia varie questioni che richiedono un'ulteriore fase di ricerca. Ci si chiede innanzitutto se (一 *yī*) + CL sia un vero articolo indefinito quando in cinese non è obbligatorio marcare la referenza indefinita del nome e nomi marcati da 个 *gè* mantengono il tratto [+definito] qualora siano collocati in posizioni sintattiche riservate a referenti definiti, come dimostrano i casi rilevati da Chen (2003) nella costruzione con 把 *bǎ*. Nonostante Chao (1968, p. 344), proprio commentando la presenza del CL davanti al nome introdotto da 把 *bǎ*, rivendichi la possibilità di 个 *gè* di avere uno sviluppo diverso dall'articolo inglese, un articolo indefinito che può marcare, per quanto in casi marginali, un nome definito è un articolo indefinito? Una seconda questione riguarda la forma della costruzione numerale che si sarebbe imposta o si starebbe imponendo in questa funzione: 一 *yī* + CL o la forma ridotta al CL? Come in varie lingue europee l'articolo si presenta, per ragioni fonetiche, in forme diverse (un/uno, *a*/*an*) a seconda della sua collocazione, si potrebbe supporre che, sempre per ragioni fonetiche, in cinese si affermi 一 *yī* + CL in posizione preverbale, essendo il CL un clitico che deve appoggiarsi a una sillaba precedente, mentre in posizione postverbale l'erosione fonetica che accompagna il processo di desemantizzazione determini la prevalenza della forma ridotta al solo CL. Ma si imporrà (一 *yī*) + ogni diverso CL specifico o prevarrà (一 *yī*) + il CL generico 个 *gè*, visto che quest'ultimo di norma già sostituisce gli altri classificatori nei particolari contesti descritti da Biq (2004) e Chen (2003)? D'altro canto, mentre i dati di He (2008, p. 99) registrano percentuali molto basse dell'uso della Num+CL nella lingua parlata nella Repubblica popolare cinese, i dati di Liu (2010) sul cinese parlato a Taiwan mostrano una sempre maggiore diffusione di 一 *yī* + 个 *gè* in funzione di articolo, con il numerale espresso in tutte le posizioni sintattiche, mentre i dati di Tao (2006) sul cinese parlato a Pechino indicano come altro possibile candidato al ruolo d'articolo il solo numerale 一 *yī* non seguito da CL e pronunciato con un tono fisso, insensibile alle regole del *sandhi* tonale. Per sciogliere queste perplessità è evidentemente necessaria un'analisi che coinvolga

non solo le frasi copulative, ma tutti i contesti in cui la Num+CL non si presenta in funzione di quantificatore, tenendo presente la situazione di continua evoluzione della lingua cinese.

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Lista delle abbreviazioni

ASP = ostruzione con 把 *bǎ*
CL = classificatore
ENF = elemento enfatizzante
MOD = particella modale
N = nome
Num+CL = costruzione numerale
NOM = particella nominalizzante
PAS = marca del passivo
O = oggetto
SN = sintagma nominale
ØSN = sintagma nominale a determinante 0
ST = particella strutturale
V = verbo

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Cognitive Principles and Preverbal Position in Chinese

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Abstract In Chinese, word order is a powerful linguistic device indicating relations between constituents, on a semantic, syntactic and pragmatic level, and has been the focus of linguistic inquiry over the past decades. Particular attention has been given to the preverbal position, with heated debate on the notion of topic and other pragmatic-related phenomena. This study is a first step towards a better understanding of the order of preverbal NPs and verb modifiers, analyzing them in light of relevant cognition-based word order principles investigated within the cognitive-functional approach. Particular attention is given to the notion of 'scope', which pertains both to the discourse and the cognitive level ('topic scope' *vs.* 'temporal, spatial and semantic scope'), and which seems to better explain the order and the pragmatic role of preverbal NPs. On this basis, this paper suggests a research path towards a deeper cognitive-functional comprehension of the preverbal position that takes into account the interplay of different word order related factors.

1 Introduction

Word order is one of the most fascinating and investigated topics in Chinese linguistics, and has captivated the interest of researchers over the past decades. Among the most studied aspects, there are phenomena connected with the preverbal position, which is strongly associated not only with syntactic and valency roles, but also with information status and cognitive factors. It is widely recognized that Chinese, being an isolating language with little inflectional or derivational morphology, relies heavily on word order to encode linguistic information on a syntactic, semantic and pragmatic level. These features have posed a challenge for existing linguistic theories, generating a long and still controversial debate on the grammatical and functional differences among different sentence positions, especially the preverbal position. Notions like subject, topic and other sentence-initial phenomena have been among the main focuses of linguistic inquiry.

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This study attempts to further investigate the characteristics of the preverbal position in light of some relevant cognition-based principles underlying Chinese word order, which were studied by cognitive-functional linguists such as Tai (1985, 1989, 1993 *inter alia*), Hu (1995) and Ho (1993), showing how these principles allow a better functional and cognitive explanation for linguistic elements and constituents occurring in the preverbal position. Particular attention will be given to the notion of 'scope', which pertains both to the discourse and the cognitive level, and which suggests a clearer explanation for the order of preverbal NPs.

The cognition-based functional perspective seems to allow a more logical and effective analysis of preverbal elements and structures, such as adverbials, *ba* constructions, preposed object and so on, in terms of easily identifiable cognitive principles. This approach stresses the influence of cognition processes and factors such as categorization, iconicity and memory on language forms and structures. It takes into account three domains of principles functioning at three different levels, that is, the grammatical domain at the syntactic level, the conceptual domain at the cognitive level and the functional domain at the pragmatic level (Hu 1995); thus, these principles are interconnected with certain functional phenomena, such as topic-comment structures and multiple topics, and seem to allow a clearer understanding of these phenomena in this sense. The cognition-based perspective also seems to provide a coherent basis for the claim of functional linguists such as Tsao (1979, 1990), Chu (1999) and Li (2005), that all preverbal NPs can be analyzed as hierarchically organized topics, including not only subjects and preposed object, but also time, space and manner adverbials and so on, as they are the basis/background information onto which the following part (comment) is constructed.[1]

As it will be later shown, one of the most interesting common features of both the functional analysis of topic-related phenomena and of cognitively motivated word order principles is the notion of 'scope'. In a Chinese sentence, each topic has a different scope, i.e., the part of the utterance on which the topic extends its semantic domain (controlling processes like co-referential NP deletion), with the first topic having a wider scope than the second topic (and so on). Chu (1999, pp. 302-304) effectively represents this idea with a diagram in which all preverbal NPs are topics with a scope that encloses that of the following topic-comment construction. In

1 Li, Thompson (1981) claim that time and locative phrases exhibit all the properties of topics when occurring in sentence initial position and, therefore, should be considered topics. Following this analysis, Tsao (1990) provides a detailed account for the topichood of all preverbal NPs, showing how they do possess most of the properties of topics (namely being nominal, definite or referential, extending its domain-scope to more than one sentence, controlling co-referential NP deletion and bearing no selectional relation with the main verb); in this sense, he holds that the Chinese sentence can be better defined as one or more topics followed by one or more comments (See Tsao 1990, pp. 40-70).

this sense, it will be shown how the scope of topics resembles that of word order principles such as the Principle of Temporal Scope (PTSC) (Tai 1985, p. 60) or the Principle of Whole Before Part (WBP) (Ho 1993, p. 165).

In order to clarify this interconnection and to show how such principles provide an effective explanation for preverbal position-related constructions, research on Chinese word order conducted within the cognition-based functional framework will be presented, highlighting some of its most relevant assumptions and breakthroughs; some major cognition-based word order principles will be illustrated and discussed with examples, including the Principle of Temporal Sequence, the Principle of Temporal Scope, the Whole Before Part Principle and the Principle of Information Center. Since the main concern of this paper is to investigate preverbal position-related phenomena, it suffices to present only those principles that seem more relevant for the present study, without providing a complete account and verification of all principles and subprinciples.

Section 2 briefly reviews previous studies on word order and preverbal position in Chinese, while section 3 describes the characteristics and assumptions of the cognition-based functional approach; sections 4 and 5 are devoted to present research on word order principles, introducing some of the most relevant findings, and demonstrating with examples how they function in governing Chinese word order. Section 6 attempts to apply such principles to investigate the notion of scope, as well as the relationship among cognitive factors and multiple topics analysis. In drawing the conclusions, interesting directions for further research are discussed, in particular the necessity for a deeper investigation of the interplay among pragmatic and cognitive principles, as well as their application in language instruction.

2 Research Lines on Word Order in Chinese

It is widely recognized that word order in Chinese plays a particularly important role in the analysis of sentence structure, presenting Chinese «very little morphological complexity» within a word or in grammatical relations (Li, Thompson 1981, p. 11). Moreover, the order of constituents is not only determined by syntactic constraints but also by a complex interplay of semantic, pragmatic and cognitive factors. Thus, Chinese word order has been investigated along several lines of research, both formal and functional, and great attention has been given to the preverbal position.

After the heated debate in the 1950s on the grammatical notion of subject, research on Chinese word order in the 1970s focused on typological universals, following Greensberg's work on basic patterns: the main issue was to determine whether modern Chinese has basic SOV or SVO word

order. Several linguists, such as Chu (1984), Li, Thompson (1974), Light (1979) Mei (1980), Sun, Givon (1985) and Tai (1973) *inter alia*, conducted research and proposed theories; yet many questions remained unanswered, since Chinese seems not to conform to either of the two main alignments proposed by Greensberg (Chappell 2007; Huang 2013).

The formal approach sought to uncover word order principles in terms of parameters and rules within the framework of the Universal Grammar, especially with respect to preverbal phenomena such as topicalization and left raising, with work carried out by Huang (1982) and Li (1990) among others. Nevertheless, several controversial points demand further explanation, particularly in light of a number of studies showing that word order in Chinese is defined to a great extent by informational/communicative considerations. This view is shared by several linguists, such as Hu (1995), LaPolla (1995), Li and Thompson (1976, 1981) and Li (2005). Li and Thompson (1976, 1981) and Tsao (1979, 1990) among others, investigated the properties and function of the notion of topic, arguing that the topic-comment communicative opposition is the determining factor affecting word order. They highlighted how the preverbal position is strongly associated with information status, since preverbal NPs tend to be definite or referential; however, recent corpus-based studies such as Huang (2013) show how this association is weaker than that between word order and valency roles, and that the interplay between different factors is more complex.

Though each of these studies contributed towards a better understanding of the principles underlying word order features, as Hu (1995, p. 15) maintains, they have not reached an exhaustive explanation because their scope is limited to the language-internal system itself, underestimating language-external factors related to human cognition. On the contrary, the cognitive-functional approach seeks the necessary link between language forms and functions, and system-external, functional explanations, since «genuine explanations lie in both the structures of the real world, as conceptualized by the language user, and the linearity of human speech» (Biq et al. 1996, p. 97).

3 The Cognition-based Functional Approach: Observations and Assumptions

Observation of Chinese language patterns has led to the hypothesis that, in addition to grammatical and pragmatic factors, conceptualization processes impose constraints on linguistic structures and patterns. This hypothesis has been widely investigated by Tai (1985, 1989, 1993, *inter alia*), who holds that the structures of both the human body and physical reality are reflected in language forms; thus, syntactic structures are viewed

as motivated by perceptual and cognitive structures, processing strategies and conversational principles between speakers and hearers. Certain conceptualization processes are generic, since humans have the same biological structure and live in the same physical reality; other processes, on the other hand, are culture-specific, because they are influenced by different perspectives, experiences and situations, which cause reality to be memorized, categorized and described through different patterns.[2] In Tai's words:

> Grammar can be viewed as a complex mapping function from humans' conceptualization of the multiple-dimensional physical world to the one-dimensional linearity of human speech. (Tai 1999, p. 140)

As Tai himself observes, this view is supported by recent research on cognitive development by Elman et al., which investigated human cognition in terms of connectionist network models. From this perspective, language is the conceptualization of a more complex reduction process:

> The grammars of natural languages may be thought of as solutions to an even more daunting dimension reduction problem, in which multi-dimensional meanings must be mapped onto a linear (one-dimensional) output channel (the mouth). The fact that these grammars may not always obviously resemble or reflect the underlying content of the message may be irrelevant to the question of where these solutions come from. (Elman, Jeffrey et al. 1996, p. 386)

Such an approach was first explained by Tai in its article *Toward a Cognition-Based Functional Grammar of Chinese* (1989), where he lays the basis for this new line of research. As Biq, Tai and Thompson summarize in *Recent Developments in Functional Approaches to Chinese* (1986, p. 100), this framework is a synthesis of three functional resources, namely the cognitive approach by Lakoff (1987) and Langacker (1987), the semiotic approach by Haiman (1985) and the discourse approach by Hopper and Thompson (1980, 1984). Therefore, Tai's research aims at highlighting cognitively-grounded basic principles underlying Chinese structures and patterns, especially those expressing locations and spatial relations, salience and information structure. Following Tai, other linguists, such as Hu

2 One of the most interesting implications of such assumptions is its view of language disparities and common features. On the one hand, differences among languages are due to different perspectives and processes of conceptualization of the same world experience in different socio-cultural traditions. On the other hand, the so-called *language universals* are associated with humans' common biological make-up, brain structure and cognitive abilities (Hu 1995).

(1995) and Ho (1993) further elaborated these principles' taxonomy and applications, resulting in interesting models of analysis, which will be presented in the following section.

4 Research on Conceptual Principles Underlying Chinese Language Patterns

Research on Chinese word order principles roots itself in the central spirit of the Prague School approach, which views language as consisting of two important aspects, namely structural (systematic) and functional. In particular, Mathesius and Firbas first shared the view that word order is the result of the interplay of different factors, belonging to both the grammatical and the functional level. Mathesius (1939, 1975) was the first linguist to single out five word order principles, including (i) the Principle of Grammatical Function (i.e., syntactic constraints), (ii) the Principle of Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP), expressing the tendency of sentence elements to occur in a theme-transition-rheme sequence and (iii) the Principle of Emphasis, that orders constituents so as to grab the recipient's attention;[3] developing Mathesius analysis, Firbas (1971, 1992), introduced the notion of communicative dynamism (CD) as «relative extent to which the element contributes to the development of the communication, to which, as it were, it 'pushes the communication forward'» (pp. 7-8). In unmarked word order, the element occurring in sentence-initial position (theme) carries the lowest degree of communicative dynamism, while the sentence-final element (rheme) carries the highest.[4]

In the light of the research line of the Prague School and following Haiman's work (1985), Tai observed and investigated the relationship between iconicity and word order, which he describes as «the order of linguistic expressions corresponds to their order in the conceptual world» (Tai 1993, p. 159). Two of the major principles identified by Tai are closely related to order motivation, namely the Principle of Temporal Sequence (PTS) and Principle of Temporal Scope (PTSC), ordering syntactic units according to the temporal sequence or scope of their conceptual state.

3 The taxonomy of word order principles developed by Mathesius actually includes two more principles, namely the Principle of Coherence of Members and the Principle of Sentence Rhythm; such principles were further elaborated by Firbas (1992), who combined the principle of Grammatical Function and that of Coherence of Members into what he called the Grammatical Principle, manifesting itself when the position of an element in the sentence is determined by its syntactic function.

4 Firbas (1992) also persuasively demonstrated that these principles vary in their importance in different languages, which is consistent with the considerations of several linguists believing that Chinese is a discourse-oriented language, where discourse factors are more relevant than syntactic ones in shaping sentences and patterns.

Tai (1985) argues that PTS has great explanatory potential in Chinese grammar, claiming that, «it subsumes under one general principle a large number of word order rules hitherto regarded as unrelated. It governs the word order behaviours of the majority of the syntactic categories definable in this language» (p. 63). Directly connected principles include Whole-Before-Part and Container-Before-Contained, which pertain in turn to the dimension of space. These principles will be illustrated in the following section.

Following Tai's work, Hu devotes his dissertation work to further develop a word order principles taxonomy and to apply them to explain grammatical patterns and structures, including sentential starting points (topics), pseudo passives, presentative sentences, subordinates and inverted sentences. Particular attention is drawn on the interplay among such principles in defining structures. Combining, primarily, Firbas' (1992) word order principles governing Indo-European languages like English and Tai's (1985, 1989, 1993) work on Chinese word order principles, Hu categorizes Chinese word order principles into three domains, i.e., conceptual, functional and grammatical; the principles that Tai had singled out fall into the first domain, while the principles of Firbas and Mathesius belong to the second one:

Conceptual domain	1	Principle of Temporal Sequence
	2	Principle of Temporal Scope
	3.	Whole-Before-Part
	4	Container-Before-Contained
	5	Trajector-Landmark
Functional domain	6	Principle of Communicative Dynamism
	7	Principle of FSP
	8	Principle of Perspective Taking
	9	Principle of Focus
	10	Principle of Coherence and Relevance
Grammatical domain	11	Modifier-Before-Head

Ho (1993), in turn, investigated Chinese discourse structure from three perspectives, namely thematic structure, information structure and word order. He maintains that a «focal point of interest for discourse analysts is [...] the study of conceptual organization of users of a particular language as manifested in the functional continuum» (p. 9). In the word order perspective, his empirical corpus-based study demonstrates how some syntactic phenomena of Chinese discourse structure are controlled by non-syntactic forces, such as cognitive processes reflected in three word order principles (i.e., the Principle of Temporal Sequence [PTS], the Principle of General Preceding Particular and the Empathetic Principle [EP]).

5 Relevant WO Principles and their Application in Explaining Preverbal Elements and Constructions

In this section definitions of some of the main word order principles are provided, as well as examples showing how they function in governing Chinese word order, and in particular how they affect the preverbal position.

5.1 The Principle of Temporal Sequence (PTS)

As previously mentioned, the principle expressing iconicity in Chinese word order is what Tai calls the Principle of Temporal sequence, defined as:

> The relative word order between syntactic units is determined by the temporal order of the states that they represent in the conceptual world. (Tai 1985, p. 50).

This principle clearly shows how elements before the verb (i.e., preverbal constituents) need to represent a temporal state that is anterior to that of the verb; this is evident in all the following examples:

1) 我晚上七点上课。
Wo wanshang qidian shang ke.
I evening 7 o'clock have class
I have class at 7.00 in the evening.

In 1), since the time expression represents a temporal state that happens earlier than the action, it occurs before the verb: *wanshang qi dian* (7 pm) offers the starting point for the verb *shang ke* (have class). Similarly, other preverbal elements (like manner and place adverbials) follow the same principle:

2) 他用笔写信。
Ta yong bi xie xin.
He use pen write letter
He writes a letter with a pen.

It is cognitively clear that the moment in which he starts using the pen, (*yong bi*) precedes the action of writing (*xie xin*). This principle also allows different interpretations of sentences 3a) and 3b), which comprise the same constituents.

3a) 猫在桌子上跳。(Ho 1993, p. 150)
Mao zai zhuozi shang tiao.
Cat on table up jump
The cat is jumping around on the table.

3b) 猫跳在桌子上。
Mao tiao zai zhuozi shang.
Cat jump on table up
The cat has jumped onto the table.

In 3a) the preverbal position of the locative expression *zai zhuozi shang* (on the table) indicates that the cat had been on the table before jumping around on it. In 3b) the locative expression *zai zhuozi shang* (on the table) is placed in a post-verbal position, therefore the location represents the result of the action *tiao* (jump).

In this sense, preverbal NPs seem to provide a temporal or spatial background onto which the following part is constructed, which is one of the properties of topics. As Tsao (1990) holds, even though occurring not in sentence initial position, such adverbials are considered topics, providing a frame that limits the validity of the following part (i.e., the comment).

5.2 The Whole-Before-Part principle (WBP)

> Constituents representing a global scope (general or whole) should precede those that represent a smaller scope (particular or specific). (Ho 1993, p. 165)

Tai originally formulated this principle relating it to the temporal domain: «If the conceptual state represented by a syntactic unit X falls within the temporal scope of the conceptual state represented by a syntactic unit Y, then the word order is YX» (Tai 1985, p. 60); the validity of this principle is evident considering the order of temporal/locative expressions:

4) 2002 年 11 月 25 日下午 4 点。
Er ling ling san nian shi yi yue er shi wu ri xia wu si dian.
2003 year November twenty-five date afternoon four o’clock
At 4.00 p.m. on 25 November 2003.

Thus, this principle is very important in expressing a relationship between two constituents where one falls within the scope of the other. This principle thus accounts for presentative sentences introduced by locative expressions, such as 5), where *tushuguan* (library) is the spatial scope within which the predicate *you hen duo shu* (there are many books) is valid.

5) 图书馆里有很多书。
Tushuguan li you hen duo shu.
Library inside have many book
There are many books in the library.

This is reminiscent of the property of topic being the framework that limits the validity of the predication (comment): the fact that there are many books is valid only within the space indicated by the topic (library).

5.3 Principle of Information Center (PIC)

> The asserted part of a sentence is ordered after the presupposed part. (Tai 1989, p. 210)

Tai defines the Information Center as the asserted part (what other linguists call *informational*, *natural* or *regular focus*).[5] This principle is also consistent with the topic-comment structure in Chinese, as well as with the Given Before New principle, in that, as Tai maintains, «both topic and what is presupposed represent 'given' information, and comment and the asserted 'new' information» (Tai 1989, p. 210).

6a) 学校到了新老师。
Xuexiao dao le xin laoshi.
School arrive LE new teacher
A new teacher came to the school.

6b) 新老师到了学校。
Xin laoshi dao le xuexiao.
New teacher arrive LE school
The new teacher came to the school

In 6.a), *Xuexiao* (the school) is the presupposition/given information/topic in the sentence, whereas *xin laoshi* (a new teacher) is the assertion/new information/part of the comment; in 6.b) it is the other way around, resulting in different meanings of the two sentences.

5 There are differences in terminology on the notion of focus in the literature. For a detailed account, see Jiang 2009, p. 27.

6 Cognitive Principles, Topic Scopes and Preverbal Elements

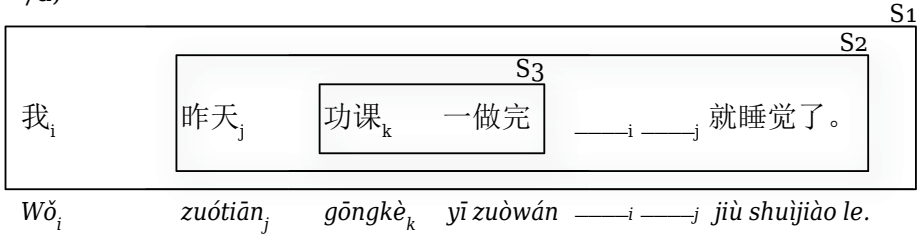
On the basis of the principles illustrated above, the positions of all preverbal elements are determined according to the order in which elements occur in the mind of the speaker; this is consistent with the idea of reference and definiteness, which is a subjective mental state[6] and is usually associated with sentence-initial position as a property of topics. Moreover, as the Whole-Before-Part principle states, the constituent with a larger logical scope precedes the other, following a scope1>scope2>scope3 pattern, in that the scope cognitively represents the background information/framework of validity of the following part.

The validity of the aforementioned principles and the role of scope are clear if we consider these two examples:

7a) 我昨天功课一做完就睡觉了。
Wo zuotian gongke yi zuowan jiu shui jiaole
I yesterday homework once do-finish then sleep LE
Yesterday, after finishing my homework, I went to sleep

7b) *我功课昨天一做完就睡觉了。
Wo gongke zuotian yi zuowan jiu shui jiaole
I homework yesterday once do-finish then sleep LE

In (a), all NPs represent given information, but they are ordered in accordance with the PTS and WBP principles, since *zuotian* has a wider temporal scope than that associated with the action of the verb (in that it is presupposed that the time in which he finishes his homework is shorter than 24 hours). Moreover, the importance of scope is clear if we try to understand why, in comparison, (b) is ungrammatical: as already said, the temporal scope of *zuotian* is bigger than that associated with the action of *gongke yi zuo wan,* (doing homework), and it logically extends its influence to the second sentence, in that the action *jiu shui jiaole*, (went to sleep) happens within the same day; therefore, *zuotian* cannot occur after *gongke* (homework). This is made clearer if we examine the following representation, which applies the diagram proposed by Chu for the analysis of the so-called double nominatives (1999, p. 302): all preverbal NPs are topics with a scope that extends its semantic influence to one or more comments, and which needs to enclose the scope of the following topic-comment constructions, otherwise the sentence is not acceptable:

6 In this sense, Hu (1985, p. 20) maintains that the influence of the speaker's perception and interpretation of the real world plays a vital role in the decision of what is given, definite or important for communication; he accepts Firbas' insight that language is not a direct reflection of the real word, but corresponds at an abstract level to «the language user's experience of the extra-linguistic reality» (Firbas 1992, p. 139).

This suggests that there is a cognitive explanation to what Tsao (1979, 1990), Chu (1999) and Li (2005), hold, i.e., preverbal elements are hierarchically organized topics, in that they have different scopes ordered according to their extension. Let us consider the following sentences, which present the same constituents as 7a), though with a different order of different preverbal NPs:

7c) *功课我昨天一做完就睡觉了。
Gongke wo zuotian yi zuowan jiu shui jiaole
Homework I yesterday once do-finish then sleep LE

7d) *功课昨天我一做完就睡觉了。
Gongke zuotian wo yi zuowan jiu shui jiaole
Homework yesterday I once do-finish then sleep LE

7e) 昨天我功课一做完就睡觉了。
Zuotian wo gongke yi zuowan jiu shui jiaole
Yesterday I homework once do-finish then sleep LE

7f) ?昨天功课我一做完就睡觉了。
Zuotian gongke wo yi zuowan jiu shui jiaole
Yesterday homework I once do-finish then sleep LE

According to native speakers, the only fully acceptable sentence is 7e), while 7c), and 7d) are not acceptable; 7d) sounds strange, and some think

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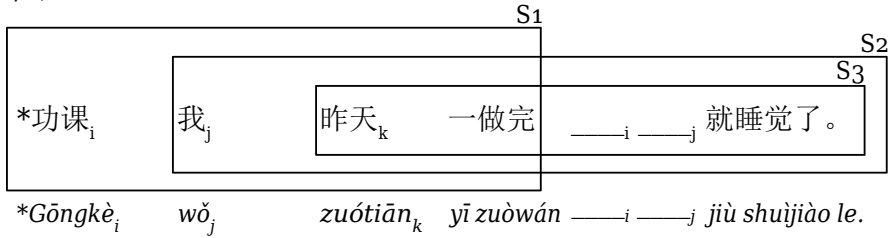
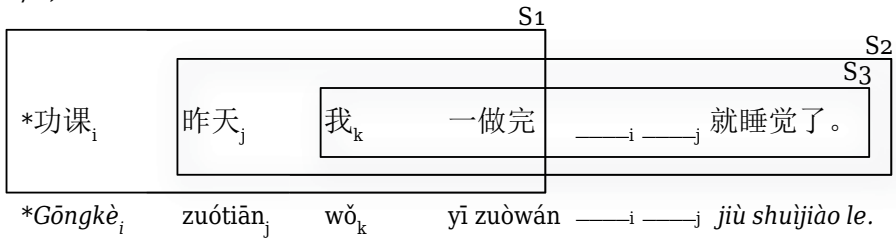
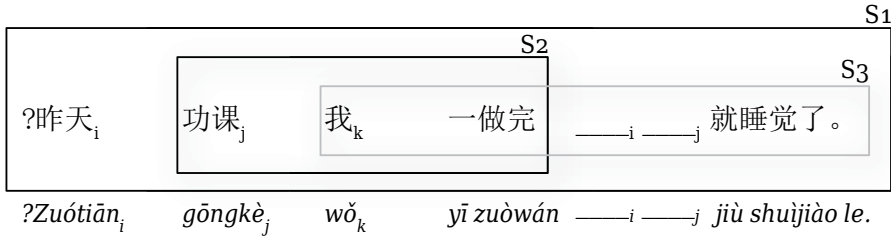
it could be slightly acceptable only in oral communication and in particular communication contexts. If we use the diagram above to analyze the sentence structure in terms of the (functional topic or cognitive principle-based) scope of each of the preverbal NPs, this native speakers' analysis of acceptability is easily demonstrated:

Both 7c) and 7d) present *gongke* (homework) as the first NP, which Temporal Scope and Topic Scope extends until the first predication *yi zuowan* (finish), while the second and third NPs, *wo* (I) and *zuotian* (yesterday) extend their scope to both predicates, including *shui jiaole* (slept), being the subject/agent and the time frame of both actions, respectively. Sentence 7e), in turn, perfectly suits the scope1>scope2>scope3 pattern, and is therefore acceptable to native speakers, not only for grammatical/pragmatic reasons, but also on a cognitive level:

As for the last sentence, the scopes of the different NPs do not respect the scope1>scope2>scope3 pattern, in that the scope of *wo* (I) is larger than that of the previous NP *gongke* (homework); nevertheless, native speakers' judgment of partial acceptability (in oral communication and in particular contexts) might depend on the fact that *wo* (I) actually does not represent a definite temporal scope, while *zuotian* and *gongke* do; in this sense, the Principle of Temporal Scope can be perceived as unviolated.

7f)

Another relevant example of scope application in sentences with several preverbal elements is the analysis of negative sentences. Let us consider the following sentences:

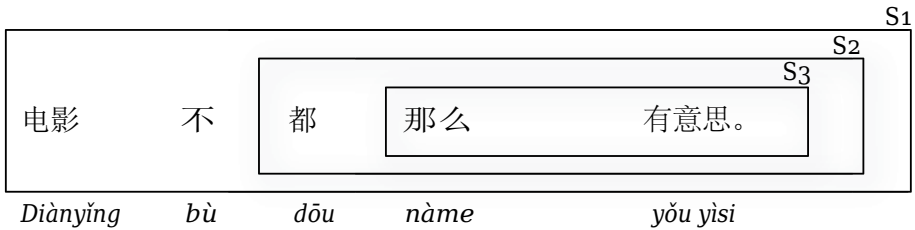
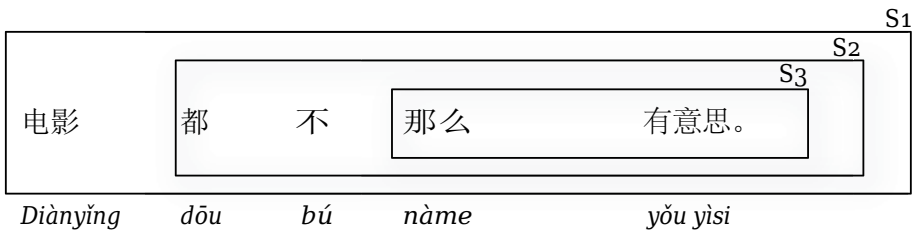
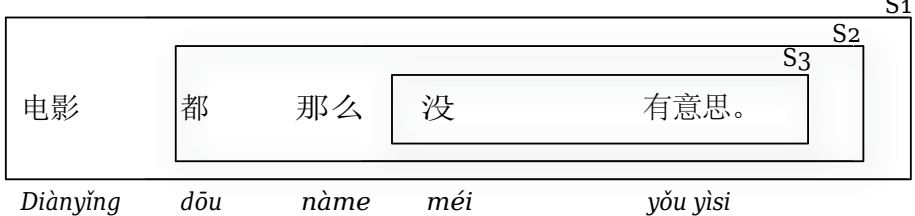
8a) 电影都那么有意思。
Dianying dou name you yisi
Movie all so interesting
All movies are interesting

8b) 电影不都那么有意思。
Dianying bu dou name you yisi
Movie not all so interesting
Not all movies are interesting

8c) 电影都不那么有意思。
Dianying dou bu name you yisi
Movie all not so interesting
All movies are not that interesting

8d) 电影都那么没有意思！
Dianying dou name mei you yisi
Movie all so not interesting
All movies are so boring!

These sentences present the same constituents, but the negation markers *bu* or *mei* (not) occur in different positions, resulting in a dramatic change

of meaning. As Chu (1999, p. 221) observes, «否定的范畴常涵盖否定之前的全部 [negation often covers the whole part [of the sentence] after the negated word]»; this can be effectively explained in terms of scope since the negation extends its influence over the whole scope of the constituent before which it occurs, as shown below:

In 8b), the negation affects the adverb *dou* (all), which in turn modifies its whole scope, namely the rest of the sentence, onto which it extends its scope. In 8c), the negation occurs before *name* (so), affecting in turn also the predicate *you yisi* (interesting), while the adverb *dou* is not affected. In 8d) only the verb *you yisi* (interesting) is negated, which is the only constituent enclosed in its scope.

As demonstrated, there is a close relationship between discourse (topic) and cognitive (whole-before-part) scope analysis, in that they both account for sentence structuring in Chinese. It is noteworthy that Tai himself claims that the explanatory value of principles such as Temporal Scope (and later Whole Before Part) can be appreciated better with the notion of logical scope, which appears to underlie both functional and cognition-based principles (Tai 1985, p. 62).

This analysis seems to be a good starting point to understand what cognitive constraints underlie the selection of topics in an utterance on one hand, and the order of preverbal elements on the other. Moreover, it can be useful to further investigate the relationship between the cognitive level and the functional level, and how they interact in shaping language form in Chinese. Lastly, as Jiang (2009) maintains, principles of this type can certainly be useful in language instruction: as cognition-based principles closely related to the perception and conceptualization of the physical world, they can be understood and remembered more easily by Chinese L2 learners, who can also become more aware of the differences in conceptualization between their L1 and Chinese. As Hu (1995, pp. 2-3) states:

> Language disparity is associated with different conceptualization of the same reality from different perspectives in different cultures. Despite the fact that human biological make-up, cognitive abilities, and the general features of our physical world are the same, peoples around the world have different socio-cultural traditions, and different experiences in their interactions with the world. Those social variants may lead to different perspectives from which they approach the same physical reality, and may have significant impact upon their conceptualized world and hence their linguistic structures, though what degree such impact has is still not that clear.

7 Conclusions

In this paper some interesting findings regarding research on word order principles in Chinese within the framework of a cognition-based functional approach have been presented, and some of the most relevant principles governing Chinese sentence structure have been reviewed and applied to the analysis of NPs occurring in sentence preverbal position.

As we have seen, these cognition-grounded principles, if applied to preverbal NP analysis, account for many of the properties of topics, including word order properties (the topic occurring in sentence-initial or preverbal position), information status (given), cognitive status (asserted), cognitive function (the framework, background information and the basis onto which the following part of the utterance is constructed) and, finally, the scope to which it extends its semantic and logical influence (following a scope1>scope2>scope3 pattern). This suggests that such iconic principles should be taken into account to further analyze the pragmatic structure of the preverbal position in the sentence, as well as topic-related phenomena, and that they can provide evidence for and elucidate theories related to multiple topics, topic chains and so on.

This work is far from exhaustive: it only seeks to draw a research path that can be useful to gain a more complete understanding of such phenomena. Further investigation is needed to understand the interplay between cognitive and functional factors, as well as to review the taxonomy of word order principles proposed by the various linguists: it appears that a lot of the principles actually derive from similar cognitive and logical conceptualizations, as observed in several points of this paper. Moreover, concrete applications in language instruction for learners of different languages are an especially interesting line of research, since language teaching could be significantly improved by applying cognition-based principles accounting for both conceptual similarities and differences among cultures and languages.

Nevertheless, the cognition-based functional approach has proved to be a valid research framework in this respect, in that it takes into account the grammatical domain at the syntactic level, the conceptual domain at the cognitive level and the functional domain at the pragmatic level, and seeks to discover how these different levels interact with each other in determining word order in Chinese: «the grammatical principles constitute conventionalized conceptual and functional principles brought about by the process of grammaticalization. The three domains of principles both cooperate and compete in governing Chinese word order and its variations» (Jiang 2009, p. 107). Further research along this line will certainly advance the study of the processes underlying language forms, which many linguists see as a continuum from cognition-based structures to functional patterns to conventionalized grammar, «involving a transfer from 'concrete' to 'abstract' domains of conceptualization on the one hand and conversational implicatures and context-induced reinterpretation on the other. This process leads to the emergence of grammaticalized structures as the conventionalized, frozen, or fossilized product of those cognitive activities» (Heine et al. 1991, p. 248).

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Dynamite Against the *Bundan*
Fantasies of Empowerment and Violence in the Writings of Yamamura Bochō

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Abstract This study investigates the strategies of empowerment within the literary field that were adopted by Yamamura Bochō (1884-1924), an author of *shi* (poetry in non-traditional forms) who ephemerally came to the fore of the Japanese literary scene (*bundan*) with the collection *Seisanryōhari* (The Holy Prism), published in 1915. It is focused on Bochō's articulation of a fantasy of empowerment by destruction and regeneration: such tropes are similar to the rhetorical strategies adopted by the European avant-garde movements, and, in evoking such categories as 'terrorism' or 'anarchism', they border the domains of early 20th century political discourse. These tropes are analyzed focusing on a genealogical perspective that involves both intertextual and historical research. It is argued that the rhetoric of antagonism and destruction can be a relevant focus in order to appreciate the modalities of construction of a modernist discourse from both a Japanese and comparative perspective.

> Petroleum and dynamite do not belong exclusively to politics; someday they will liberate us from the tyranny of the glories of our artistic past. (Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, 1912)[1]

1 Introduction

The Japanese poet Yamamura Bochō (1884-1924) is mainly known as the author of *Seisanryōhari* (The Holy Prism, December 1915), a collection of *shi* (poetry in non-traditional forms) that is considered to have been a solitary forerunner of the avant-garde and modernist movements of the Shōwa period (1926-1989) due to its defiant formal experiments.[2] Slated

1 Quoted in E.-J.B. 1912. Unless otherwise specified, all translations from French and Japanese are my own.

2 No monographic studies on Bochō are available in English. Translations of his poetry are quite dispersed; among them, three poems are presented in Rimer, Gessel 2005, pp. 298-299. General presentations of his life and work can be found in Wilson, Atsumi 1972; Keene 1999, pp. 281-283.

by some contemporary critics, such as Kawaji Ryūkō (1888-1959), and only half-heartedly defended even by the members of Bochō's literary coterie, such as Murō Saisei (1889-1962), *Seisanryōhari* went generally ignored by the majority of the *bundan* (Japanese literary establishment), marking the failure of Bochō's self-styled «prismist» (*purizumisuto*) period of formal and linguistic experiments in *shi*.

A belated endorsement of *Seisanryōhari* came from Hagiwara Sakutarō (1886-1942), one of the most important Japanese poets of his generation. In an article titled «Nihon ni okeru miraiha no shi to sono kaisetsu» (Poetry of the Japanese Futurist School and Its Explanation), published in the magazine *Kanjō* (Sentiment) in November 1916 (now in KSGS-SZ, vol. 2, pp. 24-29), Sakutarō introduced «futurism» (*miraiha*) as a critical category viable in the analysis of Bochō's poetry. In Sakutarō's words, *Seisanryōhari* was an instance of the «art of the most extreme Symbolism», which he defined as «futurism». Even though Sakutarō defined *Seisanryōhari* as a piece of Japanese futurism, his idea of futurism probably did not correspond to what 'futurism' meant in Italy or France (Omuka 2000, pp. 253-254). However, he was probably right in establishing a link of some sort between Bochō's experiments and the works of the European avant-gardes, which were profusely presented in Japan at the time Bochō was writing the poems that were included in *Seisanryōhari*.

Such connections with the discourses on/of European avant-garde have been routinely discussed or even just mentioned by Japanese scholars, meaning Bochō's 'avant-garde' production has been studied more than the later humanistic poetry to which he devoted himself after the failure of his prismist project. However, despite the evocative label of «futurist» poet, it must be remembered that, like the anarchist shooters and bombers who had pursued in Europe the so-called 'propaganda by the deed' in the preceding decades, Bochō fundamentally 'acted alone'. As noted by commentators, the very impression that his «prismism» (*purizumizumu*)[3] was an actual school or avant-garde group with a well-defined and coherent aesthetic was part of the largely fictional narrative of empowerment that he elaborated during his 'prismist period' (1913-1916).[4]

3 In some of his writings around 1915, Bochō defines himself as a «prismist» (*purizumisuto*) or a «saint-prismist» (*seipurizumisuto*). Both words seem to derive from an *a posteriori* rationalization of the poetic method implemented in *Seisanryōhari*. They also contain suggestions from the discourse of artistic avant-garde, such as the circulation of similar European labels in '-ism' (e.g., *kyūbizumu*, *fyūchurizumu*, etc.). Murō Saisei also attached the prismist label to Bochō in his preface to *Seisanryōhari*. However, behind it, there was no organized school. Bochō did have some disciples, but none of those who gathered around his *dōjin zasshi* (coterie magazines) showed any specific interest in following him in his formal experiments. I have discussed these aspects in Zanotti 2011.

4 Following a general consensus among Japanese scholars, I define the 'prismist period' (or *Seisanryōhari jidai*) as the period between May 1913 – release of *Sannin no otome* (Three

In building up this narrative, Bochō's writings did have a series of elements in common with the discourses on/of the European avant-garde groups. In this paper, leaving aside Bochō's poetry, I will try to locate these elements in his prose writings, where his self-representation as an 'avant-garde' writer is more clearly articulated. I will focus in particular on Bochō's usage of expressions of violence and aggression against the literary establishment. In their articulation of a fantasy of empowerment by destruction and regeneration, such tropes are in many ways similar to the rhetorical strategies adopted by Italian Futurists in their fight against «passéist» institutions, and, in evoking such categories as 'terrorism' or 'anarchism', they border the domains of early 20th century political discourse, in which these categories were recurrent tropes. Since images of arson and bombing appear coupled in Bochō's writings, as in the representative sentence by Marinetti that opens this paper, I will specifically analyze them, particularly focusing on a genealogical perspective that involves both intertextual and historical research. One of my assumptions is that the rhetoric of antagonism and destruction can be considered to be a relevant focus in order to appreciate the modalities of construction of a modernist discourse from both a Japanese and comparative perspective.

I also intend to contribute some suggestions on the issue of Bochō's 'futurism', a critical topic that was inaugurated by Sakutarō's idiosyncratic labelling in the aforementioned 1916 article.[5] Notwithstanding his knowledge of some aspects and works of the European avant-garde movements and many common grounds, this paper will show that the intertextual elements that support the definition of Bochō as a follower of or adherent of the doctrines of Italian Futurism appear to be scarce and critically dubious.

2 Yamamura Bochō

Yamamura Bochō (real name Kogure Hakkujū)[6] was born to a peasant family in Gunma Prefecture and had to struggle to obtain an education. His fam-

Maidens), Bochō's previous collection of mainly Symbolist poetry – and the beginning of 1917 when his move towards the camp of humanitarian and populist literature became apparent. As for their previous publication in a magazine, the thirty-six pieces in *Seisanryōhari* date from May 1914 to June 1915.

5 Much of the debate, which also involves the reception of Cubism and other avant-garde movements, is reconstructed in Tanaka 1988, pp. 170-193. Other relevant opinions are expressed in Itō 1979, p. 14; Inoue 1988; Ichimura 1989, pp. 163-170; Nakamura 1995, pp. 194-198.

6 Kogure was the family name of his biological father. However, at his birth, Bochō was originally registered as the second son of his maternal grandfather, whose family name was Shimura. He changed his family name in 1913 when he became an adopted son-in-law of his wife's family, the Tsuchidas. This explains why his name appears as Shimura or Tsuchida in many sources. 'Hakujū' is another recurring reading of his first name.

ily's economic instability prevented him from completing elementary school; however, he continued to study, read, and educate himself independently. When he was fifteen, he had sufficiently advanced his education to obtain a teaching position in his former school. He later devoted himself to the study of English and in 1902, converted to Anglicanism. Due to his connections with the Church, he was admitted to Tsukiji Seisan Isshin Gakkō (Holy Trinity School), the institute that trained Japanese Anglican ministers (it later merged with Rikkyō University), and graduated in 1908. In Tokyo, he began to cultivate his literary vocation as well. After graduating, he moved from one appointment to another as a missionary in a half-dozen north-eastern parishes. He finally settled down in Taira from 1912 to 1918, a town in Fukushima Prefecture that is part of the Iwaki municipality today.

As a peripheral intellectual with a well-established position in the local regional *bundan*, Bochō made every effort to remain in touch with the Tokyo *bundan* as well. This may explain the eccentricity of his literary trajectory – it reflects a spasmodic search for recognition and empowerment.

In 1904 he made his debut as a writer of post-Romantic *tanka*. Then he converted to *shi* and became fascinated with Kanbara Ariake's obscure Symbolism. At the same time, he flirted with Naturalism and *kōgo jiyūshi* (poetry in spoken language and free verse). However, he rapidly changed sides when the movement's fortunes declined and the *bundan* faced a resurgence of anti-Naturalist trends. By 1914, after the publication of his mainly Symbolist, Verlainesque collection entitled *Sannin no otome* (Three Maidens, May 1913), Bochō came to be associated with the disciples of Kitahara Hakushū (1885-1942). At the summit of this repositioning, he established a tactical alliance with two emerging poets of the same coterie: Murō Saisei from Kanazawa and Hagiwara Sakutarō from Maebashi.

Around June 1914, the three young men founded Ningyo Shisha (Mermaid Poetry Society). In March 1915, they launched their own magazine, *Takujō funsui* (Tabletop Fountain), to a meagre audience, resulting in the magazine's premature cancellation after only three issues. Around the same time Bochō edited two short-lived *dōjin zasshi* (coterie magazines) in Taira: *Fūkei* (Landscape, May-November 1914) and *Le Prisme* (April-August 1916), where many of his 'prismist' works were originally published.

The shaky Ningyo Shisha came to an end after the controversies raised by the publication of *Seisanryōhari* (December 1915). Though the collection was largely unnoticed by the dominant sectors of the literary world, Bochō fell prey to attacks mainly orchestrated by Miki Rofū (1889-1964) and his disciples, who wrote for the magazine *Mirai* (Future).[7] Poems

7 The *Mirai* group included Kawaji Ryūkō and Yanagisawa Ken (1889-1953), among others. Sakutarō's later depiction, in the commemorative article «Yamamura Bochō no koto» (On Yamamura Bochō, *Nihon shijin* [The Japanese Poet], February 1926), on the vicious attacks

such as «Fūkei» (Landscape) or the infamous «Geigo» (Delirium) were interpreted by his contemporaries as little more than bad jokes.

Landscape
Rape-flowers everywhere
Rape-flowers everywhere
Rape-flowers everywhere
Rape-flowers everywhere
Rape-flowers everywhere
Rape-flowers everywhere
Rape-flowers everywhere
Faint fluting with a wheat-blade
Rape-flowers everywhere[8]

DELIRIUM
THEFT GOLDSH
ROBBERY TRUMPET
BLACKMAIL VIOLIN
GAMBLING CAT
FRAUD SARAÇA
BRIBERY VELUDO
ADULTERY APPLE
ASSAULT SKYLARK
MURDER TULIP
ABORTION SHADOW
SEDITION SNOW

As for his peers, Saisei adopted an ambiguous stance in support of his colleague, while Sakutarō, an enthusiastic reader of some of Bochō's poems, was one of the few who publicly defended Bochō's experimentalism. However, Sakutarō began to perceive a growing discrepancy between Bochō's poetry and his own at the time, which would soon find acclaim through his *Tsuki ni hoeru* (Howling at the Moon, 1917) collection.

Ningyo Shisha *de facto* disbanded in June 1916, when Sakutarō and Saisei founded another magazine, *Kanjō* (Sentiment), without inviting Bochō to

on *Seisanryōhari* from an angered *bundan*, is generally judged by modern scholars as being too emphatic. See Tanaka 1988, pp. 236-237; Kitagawa 1995, p. 35. In this article, Sakutarō eulogized his recently deceased colleague by depicting him as a «martyr» of the ignorance of the times. He went on to say that «perhaps there has been no writer [in the Meiji and Taishō eras] that experienced the derision and the insults of the poetry world as much as Yamamura Bochō»; in the same piece, Sakutarō defined Bochō as the «father of the Japanese school of Cubist poetry» (quoted in Inamura 1987, pp. 119-132).

8 «Fūkei», lines 1-9, as translated in Wilson, Atsumi 1972, p. 466.

contribute. From around 1917, Bochō began to abandon his «prismist» poetry and converted to the humanitarian, Whitmanesque, «democratic» style of poetry that was in vogue at the time. This change was made official in his following collection, *Kaze wa kusaki ni sasayaita* (The Wind Has Whispered to the Plants, 1918), which also marked Bochō’s disappearance from the Tokyo literary scene. Bochō never again gained the same kind of attention that he had with *Seisanryōhari*, a collection that had profited from his temporary connections to the Tokyo poetry scene and his attempted appropriation of the avant-garde discourse.

He was already nearly forgotten when, in 1924, he died from complications of tuberculosis. As a sort of poetic testament, he left a collection, *Kumo* (Clouds), which was posthumously published in 1925. This publication contributed to obscuring his pioneering role in avant-garde literature, and established, in the prewar critical discourse of *shi*, his reputation as a bucolic poet of «clouds and children».[9]

3 The Rhetoric of Antagonism in Bochō’s Writings

The empirical starting point of this research is the fact that in Bochō’s letters and writings (short essays, articles, editorial columns) from around 1914 to 1916 one can detect attitudes of aversion towards the literary and cultural status quo. In some of their articulations, these feelings reach a violence that makes a reader accustomed with early 20th century artistic discourse think of the antagonistic polemics of the European avant-garde movements, particularly those systematically carried out by the Italian Futurists.

From a biographical standpoint, the emergence of such tones seems to be chronologically related to three factors in Bochō’s life.

The first factor is the failure of *Fūkei*, a *dōjin zasshi* that Bochō edited and published in Taira. After many hardships, lack of financial support, and only six monthly issues, *Fūkei* folded in November 1914 without having a significant impact on the literary scene. Bochō had great personal expectations of this magazine, which he had conceived as a vehicle for his poetry and tangible proof of his leadership in the local literary scene.

The second factor seems to be – right between the end of 1914 and the beginning of 1915 – that Bochō acquired some familiarity with an array of sources related to the European avant-garde movements. These comprised art history books like Kimura Shōhachi’s *Geijutsu no kakumei* (Revolution in Art, May 1914) and *Miraiha oyobi rittaiha no geijutsu* (The Art of Futurism and Cubism, March 1915), the anthology of translations of French

9 Section 2 of this paper is an improved version of Zanotti 2011, pp. 287-290.

poetry *Rira no hana* (Lilac Flowers, November 1914) edited by Yosano Hiroshi (1873-1935, better known today by the pen name of 'Tekkan', which he regularly used until 1905),[10] and many articles presenting the European avant-garde movements, which were being released at that time in the Japanese press.[11] Textual evidences of Bochō's cognizance of Arthur Jerome Eddy's *Cubists and Post-Impressionism* (1914), a book on the new trends in European art characterized by a sympathetic view of Cubism, Futurism, and «Compositionalism» (i.e., Kandinsky's painting) appear a little later, around January 1916.

The third factor is the completion of *Seisanryōhari*. This collection must have looked like a breakthrough work to Bochō, and its upcoming epiphany in the literary world as something to be awaited and prepared for as a revolutionary event. This can be noted in the nearly messianic tones in which Bochō describes his own literary activity around this period. Combative metaphors appear repeatedly in his editorials, reflecting an antagonistic stance towards the poetry scene (*shidan*): «I am ready to fight. Until I fall down» («Shōsoku» [News], *Fūkei*, May 1914) (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 545),[12] and «As a man with a life, I am already in arms, I raise my weapons up in the

10 Kimura's *Geijutsu no kakumei* featured a translation of Frank Rutter's *Revolution in Art: An Introduction to the Study of Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Other Modern Painters* (1910) that dealt for the most part with post-Impressionist masters. Kimura too, a post-Impressionist painter and critic in his own right, devoted the long original essay that makes up the core of the book to these masters. The most interesting section of the book is the final one because it contains a complete translation of Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger's *Du Cubisme* (from its English translation of 1913), partial translations of the manifestos included in the catalogue of the *Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters* held at the Sackville Gallery in London in March 1912, and a translation of Camille Mauclair's article «Le Futurisme et la jeune Italie» (Futurism and Young Italy), which was originally published in the *Dépêche de Toulouse* on 30 October 1911. This article was routinely sent as a leaflet by Marinetti to all his new contacts. *Miraiha oyobi rittaiha no geijutsu* reworked the materials presented in *Geijutsu no kakumei* and Kimura added longer commentaries in the form of personal considerations and fictive dialogues; however, his opinion on the new movements remained fundamentally negative. *Lilac Flowers* (a more precise translation could be *The Flowers of the [Closerie des] Lilas* from the name of the bistrot in Paris frequented at that time by Yosano and many French poets) presented in translation one poem each by Marinetti («A l'automobile de course»), Aldo Palazzeschi («La fontana malata»), Valentine de Saint-Point («Les pavots de sang»), and Blaise Cendrars (an early version of «Ma danse» that was later reprinted as one of the *19 poèmes élastiques*). All these authors were introduced to the reader as «futurist poets». Substantial excerpts from Kimura's books can be read today in KSGS-K (vol. 1, pp. 3-148, 225-454). *Rira no hana* is available in vol. 13 of *Tekkan Akiko zenshū*.

11 For a rich but still incomplete collection of such articles, see KSGS-SZ (vols. 1-2). The critical literature on the introduction of European avant-gardes in Japan is constantly growing. See, on Futurism and in European languages: Omuka 2000; Hackner 2001; Nishino 2009.

12 In his *Fūkei* editorial columns, Bochō tended to adopt a more flamboyant language than that used by him in other magazines. See for instance his editorial in the second issue of the magazine (June 1914), in YBZ (vol. 4, pp. 546-548).

sky. I won't back off, not even by a single step» («Shiran senpyō» [Selection and Comment for the Poetry Column], *Shūsai bundan*, December 1914) (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 560).[13]

This attitude became particularly marked after he established Ningyo Shisha, around June 1914, together with Murō Saisei and Hagiwara Sakutarō.[14] In April 1915, the magazine *Sōzō* (Creation) published a survey on «the recent poetry scene» («Saikin no shidan») conducted among their regular contributors. Responding on behalf of Ningyo Shisha, Bochō sent the following statement: «Today's poetry scene is all about common sense poetry and obsolete people. The members of Ningyo Shisha have been assigned by Heaven (*ten*) a duty to sanitize the poetic scene and the world of men in general. So they have been given a gun each» (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 563).

This short piece sounds like a communiqué from an action group and contains an extremely violent attack, something that was quite new in the literary world of that time. Even if Bochō stayed on a metaphorical level, he would evoke the possibility of a physical elimination of what was wrong in the poetic scene of his days. By that he means the «common sense poetry» (*konmon sensu no shi*) and the «obsolete people» (*kyūjin*), the poets with an established position, as implicitly opposed to the *shinjin*, the newcomers.[15] The word *eiseigakari* ('duty of sanitization') conjures up the idea of a hygienic sterilization, and Ningyo Shisha members are depicted as entrusted of a heavenly mission to disinfect the world of letters with «a gun each». Ningyo Shisha's mandate is not limited to the poetry scene but can be virtually extended to «the world of men in general».

Among the regular contributors to *Sōzō* who replied to the survey, there were members of Miki Rofū's rival coterie. Perhaps Bochō deliberately used such provocative tones because he knew that his declaration was to be published next to those sent by the authors to whom his accusations were more or less explicitly addressed (in fact, Hattori Yoshika [1886-1975]

13 A similar image appears in a letter to Mogi Shōzō (24 March 1915; YBZ, vol. 4, p. 663). *Shūsai bundan* (The Literary World of the Talented Ones) was a well-established literary magazine to which Bochō had contributed since the beginning of his career. In this, as in other magazines, Bochō was involved in the administration of a «poetry column» (*shiran*) in which he commented on poems sent by the readers.

14 The involvement of Bochō with Ningyo Shisha has been widely studied by Japanese scholars: see Itō 1979; Tanaka 1988, pp. 275-342; Kitagawa 1995, pp. 265-277. After the release of *Seisanryōhari*, Ningyo Shisha went on an indefinite hiatus. Sakutarō and Saisei founded another magazine, *Kanjō* (Sentiment), in June 1916, without inviting Bochō to collaborate. He joined them only in October, but distanced himself from the pair again in November 1917, apparently because of growing divergences with Saisei. With this rupture, Bochō practically estranged himself from the central *shidan* of Tokyo. See also Ichimura 1995.

15 A similar but far less violent attack can be found in «Sensha mōgo» (The Lies of a Selector, *Shinhyōron* [New Criticism], May 1915), where Bochō claims that, unlike many poets of today «who value the common sense», he, as an «enemy of mediocre poem-makers», is not prone to any compromise (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 564).

and Shirotori Seigo [1890-1973] took the occasion of this survey to bitterly criticize Kitahara Hakushū and his Ningyo Shisha protégés) (Tanaka 1988, pp. 331-332).[16] Placed almost at the end of the rubric, after a series of generally urbane declarations on their own poetic tastes offered by the other contributors, Bochō's short communiqué appears as a blunt and confrontational statement. Despite such circumstantial usage of words for shock value, his tone and expressions imply a fantasy of violent purification and cleansing that, as we will see, is not isolated in his writings of this period.

A few months later, similar tones can be found in «Awabi tori wa» (Ear Shell Fishers), an essay that appeared in *Ginkei* in September 1915:

> I think that there is nothing as idiotic as today's poetry scene (the same could be probably said of the entire literary scene). I'm so upset I won't say any more. They still have to open their eyes. They build their power through groups and circles, this is their policy; they are all busy at saving the appearances of this awful state of things; don't they even surpass those stupid politicians in that? Behind the curtains, it is a laughable mechanism. In such a situation, works of distinction are not going to appear. In times like these, true things cannot but stay silent. Otherwise, one should stand up with a gun in hand. It's about knocking down or being knocked down. But if you even knocked him down, there wouldn't be too much honour with such an opponent. (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 352)[17]

In this piece, Bochō keenly criticizes the organization and distribution of power within the contemporary literary scene. In his words, the *shidan* (here conceived as part of the *bundan*), with all its intrigues and hypocrisy that suffocate the appearance of true talents, falls to a lower level than that of professional politicians. Here, too, in articulating his critique to the «state of impasse of today's literary scene»,[18] Bochō resorts to the image of a physical elimination of one's opponent in the world of cultural production.

In these writings, the object of Bochō's aversion is posited in the terms of a non-metaphorical and non-euphemized representation of authority within the literary field. In other words, here Bochō explicitly resents and targets his actual competitors for the material and symbolic profits connected to poetic activity, as well as the holders of such profits (consecrated poets).

16 Following this and other episodes, Ningyo Shisha stopped considering *Sōzō* a neutral place for their activities.

17 *Ginkei* (the name of an ancient instrument) was a Kyoto *dōjin zasshi*.

18 «Kono geijutsu de aru» (This Art of Mine), *Gunshū e* (To the Masses), January 1916 (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 358). *Gunshū e* was a short-lived *dōjin zasshi* edited in Taira by Bochō's friend and disciple, Hanaoka Kenji (1887-1968).

Other two aspects of Bochō's polemic language will be analyzed in the following sections: the images of bombing and arson as a hyperbolic way of violent empowerment in the literary field and the rhetorical configuration of the «masses» as an obstacle to this empowerment. I will argue that these two aspects configure Bochō's fantasies of empowerment as a fictional narrative where reactionary and modernist tropes coalesce.

4 *Pereat mundus*... Dynamite as a Means to Artistic Self-assertion

When he announced the forthcoming publication of *Seisanryōhari*, Bochō produced what Itō Shinkichi (2001, p. 2) has defined as some of the earliest manifesto-like pages of the Japanese literary avant-garde. In fact, in a letter to Mogi Shōzō of 24 March 1915, Bochō declared that «In order to burn down this world of letters that sides with the ignorant people of common sense (*konmon sensu no gunmō mikata no bungeikai*), I must be an arsonist (*hōka hansha*)» (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 663). Thus, he coupled his aversion towards the status quo to an image of active destruction by fire. A few months later, on 15 September, he committed to a letter addressed to his former student Koyama Moichi (1892-1974)[19] one of his most well-known statements:

> I am manufacturing a *bomb* (*bakuretsudan*) for the literary scene and the intellectual world of today [...]
> This collection of poetry makes its appearance too early in this century, it is a rare book that is a thousand, ten thousand years in advance. This collection of mine is something that is not mine, it is the fountain of man's life. Behold how it's holy, and strong! (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 663, emphasis by Bochō)

As scholars like Itō have pointed out, Bochō's intention to bomb the literary world was nearly ten years in advance of the anarchist poets of the *Aka to kuro* (Red and Black) *dōjin zasshi*,[20] who, in the first number of their magazine (January 1923) famously stated: «What is poetry? What is a poet? Abandoning all the concepts from the past, we boldly proclaim! 'Poetry is a bomb! A poet is a dark criminal who throws a bomb against the fortified walls and doors of a prison!'» (trans. in Hirata 1993, p. 136).[21]

19 Older sources give the reading 'Shigeichi' for Koyama's first name.

20 Writing about Bochō's letter, Itō (2001, p. 2) ominously evokes the 1910-1911 Taigyaku Jiken ('High Treason Incident'), an alleged plot to assassinate the Meiji Emperor that led to the imprisonment of many leftist leaders and to the execution of twelve of them.

21 In a similar vein, writing in the June 1923 issue of *Nihon shijin*, Tsuboi Shigeji (1897-1975),

However, unlike the poets of *Aka to kuro* (Okamoto Jun, Tsuboi Shigeji, Hagiwara Kyōjirō, etc.), who belonged to a younger generation,[22] Bochō had no deep understanding of or direct commitment to the most recent developments in the international or local anarcho-communist movements except through the journalistic accounts of the deeds they inspired and the cultural debate that accompanied them.

He was undoubtedly better acquainted with earlier representations of the connections between anarchism and literature, such as those documented in such works as Vance Thompson's *French Portraits* (1900), a survey on the literary scene of contemporary France whose second edition of 1913 was among Bochō's favourite readings.[23] In the chapter «Men of Letters and Anarchy», he could have found a brief and largely unsympathetic presentation of the ideas of those French intellectuals who had praised the anarchist attacks and bombings that had deeply impressed the country's public opinion at the turn of the century: «The young literature has acclaimed the bomb-throwers and justified the stabbers» (Thompson 1913, p. 205).[24] Thompson mentioned such authors as Laurent Tailhade, Stuart Merrill, Gabriel Randon (who penned the *Litanies of Dynamite*), André Ibels, Zo d'Axa, Octave Mirbeau, Henri Mazel, and Paul Adam. He put them side by side because of their use of a «purely literary, purely decorative, artistic, sentimental» version of the «propaganda by deeds – the blunt argument of dynamite, the polemics of knives and picric acid – » (p. 209)[25] that appears to be not too different from Bochō's own.

Bochō translated a short excerpt from this book with the title of «Neo Poetori» (New Poetry, dated to April 1915; YBZ, vol. 4, p. 857)[26] in which a number of allusions to the «rebellious» (*hangyakuteki*) nature of the new poets can be found. In Thompson's passage, French *vers-libristes* are paired to «the anarchists» (a word that Bochō translates here as «kyomutōin», 'nihilists'); however, in this part of his book there is no overt mention of the latter's terrorist activities: «In its broader sense the theory might be stated in Retté's words – *tu feras ce que tu voudras*. It

a member of the *Aka to kuro* group, later defined the poetry of Dadaist Takahashi Shinkichi (1901-1987) as «a pistol, a bomb (*bakudan*)» (quoted in Chiba 1978, p. 81).

22 An idea of the participation of Hagiwara Kyōjirō and other members of the *Aka to kuro* group in the local discourses on anarchism and terrorism is provided in Gardner 2006, chapters 3 and 6.

23 In the January 1915 issue of *Shūsai bundan*, Bochō published a translation of the selection from Jules Renard's *Histoires naturelles* presented by Thompson (see Kubo 1970).

24 A survey of the trope of the anarchist bomber in England is conducted in Cole 2009. See also Melchiori 1985; Ó Donghaile 2011.

25 I ignored a minor typographical mistake.

26 It corresponds to the paragraph «Free Verse» in the chapter «The New Poetry» (Thompson 1913, pp. 100-104).

is the oriflamme of the anarchist and the poet» (Thompson 1913, p. 104; YBZ, vol. 4, p. 463).

Another earlier precedent, this time a local one, seems helpful in order to assess the historical significance of Bochō's 'bombing' imagery. It is an appeal written almost fifteen years before by the poet Yosano Hiroshi (Tekkan) as a defence of Yosano Akiko's (1878-1942) epoch-making *tankas*.

> Akiko, let's publish your collection of poems [*Midaregami* (Tangled Hair, 1901)]. Let's stop worrying about the falseness of *giri* [social obligations], worldly considerations, and other silly things – let's encourage ordinary people to use their heads. There has never been a poet who has written such beautiful poems as you do. I am certain that your poems will be loved by the people 100 or even 1000 years hence. Your poems are a bombshell [*bakudan*], a beautiful and magnificent bombshell with the power to destroy the social conventions that have lasted for so many years (trans. in Okada 2003, pp. 48-49).

It is remarkable that, despite their different purposes and contexts, Yosano's appeal and Bochō's letter share the image of the bomb and a reference to a remote future when the work of poetry they are talking about will be held in the esteem it deserves. Yosano's text is an interesting precedent for the inscription of the trope of the bomb in a discourse with a libertarian agenda, whether it confines itself to the literary world or expands to the whole of social life. However, the attitude expressed in these two texts seems quite different. Bochō's letter is marked by a more explicit antagonistic stance: his bomb is not «beautiful», and its effects do not resonate with Yosano's progressive posture, which is perhaps more in tune with the remnants of the ideology of Meiji enlightenment. As we will see later, this difference is linked to a sense of alienation felt by Bochō that seems to be lacking from Yosano's optimistic liberalism.

Some of the most radical statements by Bochō were committed to private writings, such as the above-mentioned letters; however, magazines, as versatile repositories of his public meditations and appeals on literature, also played a relevant role in the articulation and dissemination of his fantasies of empowerment within the literary field. After the closing of *Fūkei* and *Takujō funsui* (Tabletop Fountain), the official magazine of Ningyo Shisha,[27] he came to nurture great expectations towards a new magazine that he planned to launch in 1916 as a collaboration with Murō Saisei. The new periodical was to be called *Runesansu* (Renaissance). Anticipating its appearance in his column on *Shūsai bundan* in December 1915 («Chōshi

27 *Takujō funsui* ran from March to May 1915 (three issues). Now available in *Takujō funsui: Kindai bungei fukkoku sōkan*.

senpyō» [Selection and Comment of Long Poems]), Bochō announced that «its doors will be freely open to those comrades (*dōshi*) who want to throw some dynamite (*dainamaito*) against the musty art scene of today, and get intoxicated with their own purity». He concluded that «the world ought to be for the young» (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 578). In this latter passage one can detect a common motif in modernist youth mythologies, including those expounded by Futurism and Fascism. The claim for empowerment by the self-styled «young people» (*wakaki hitobito*) goes with a fetishization of their own supposed «purity» (*junshin*). *Runesansu* was to carry on the 'bombing' action initiated by *Seisanryōhari* and maybe even widen its range – with a noteworthy interdisciplinary extension – not only to the literary world, but also to the entire «art scene» (*geijutsudan*).

Eventually, despite Bochō's enthusiasm, *Runesansu* remained a mere project. The bad reception *Seisanryōhari* received isolated Bochō and irreversibly damaged the unity between the three Ningyo Shisha members. This did not stop Bochō's articulation of fantasies of empowerment in the literary field. After a period of dormancy in the first months of 1916, his writings again showed antagonistic tones during the publication of *Le Prisme* (April to August 1916), a magazine that he ran in the town of Taira for just four issues. Its premature folding heralded the end of the prismist period. To Bochō, this magazine represented the last opportunity for his poetry to meet the success he thought it deserved. Introducing *Le Prisme* to his readers in April 1916 («Chōshi senpyō», *Shūsai bundan*), Bochō resorted once again to the image of the arsonist: «From next April, I am going to put out *Le Prisme*, as a revival of *Fūkei*, the magazine of pure literature that I used to publish some time ago. We will set fire to this stagnant art world. I wish that people who want to be arsonists (*hōka hannin*) will join us» (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 584). The mention of the «stagnant art world» (*chintai-seru geijutsukai*) parallels that of the «musty art scene of today», which had appeared about four months before in the announcement of the release of *Runesansu*.

Among the tropes used by Bochō to articulate his antagonistic stance, the image of the arsonist is one of the richest in layers and nuances, where Romantic, Symbolist, and Christian motifs, all coming from different phases and experiences of his previous trajectory, melt and intertwine. An outcast, Bochō's arsonist gleams gloomily of self-destructive nuances that can be traced back to autobiographical narratives and to implicit analogies with Christological tropes. To quote the psychological and phenomenological phrasing of the avant-garde scholar Renato Poggioli, Bochō's incendiary is prone to become a victim of his own destructive actions in an act of «agonistic sacrifice for the future» and of «self-immolation» (1968, pp. 65-68). He thus finds his place in a gallery of liminal characters (halfway between Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and Rimbaud's clairvoy-

ant destitute)[28] that, according to Bochō, are the «true appraisers» of his poetry: «The true appraisers of my poetry are among the dancers of genius. Then, among musicians and sculptors. Besides, they are among detectives, murderers, arsonists (*hōka hannin*), orphans, idiots, saints, scientists, in other words, among those who live at the top of misery or jubilation. Among poets and men of letters, it is rare to find one of them in a thousand» («Tangin shigo» [Poetic Words in D#], *Shiika*, March 1916) (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 859).[29]

Bochō dives here into a bio-literary paradigm of clearly Symbolist origin, a paradigm that had been largely popularized in Japan in the previous years by essays and translations by Iwano Hōmei, Arthur Symons, Kuriyagawa Hakuson, and others. Bochō had cherished this paradigm at least since he had been forced to hastily leave Sendai in disgrace in 1910 after he clashed with a superior at the local Anglican church where he was working as a missionary. It was probably then that he began to fantasize about his identification with the model of the *poète maudit* embodied by Baudelaire, of whom he was an avid reader at that time.[30] As the passage from «Tangin shigo» shows, this implied the acceptance and even the aestheticization of his own supposed condition of marginality.

This point gives a first hint towards interpreting Bochō’s terrorist postures as a reenactment of post-Romantic and Symbolist discourses of the ‘religion of art’ (and of the artist), of the «Christlike mystique of the ‘artiste maudit’, sacrificed in this world and consecrated in the one beyond» (Bourdieu 1996, p. 83). Bochō’s dynamite neither has the same function as Yosano’s bomb that was aimed at the destruction of premodern social constraints, nor the bombs of the *Aka to kuro* poets. The latter’s terrorism was conceived as a means of social uprising, and its final goal was the liberation of the masses who were spiritually and materially oppressed by capitalism. Poetry (art) was an instrument to attain what they saw as a more important and eminently political goal. On the other hand, Bochō aimed at the full accomplishment of his own art: what hinders or negates this accomplishment (critics, the *bundan*, the ignorant audience) must be destroyed. Bochō’s discourse can be termed in this respect as marked by

28 See: «[The Poet] becomes among all men the great invalid, the great criminal, the great accursed – and the Supreme Scientist! For he attains the *unknown*!» («Letter of the Seer», emphasis in the original) (Rimbaud [1871] 2008, p. 116). See also Poggioli 1968, pp. 109-112.

29 This passage was later excised when the text was included in the collection of essays *Chiisana kokusō yori* (From the Little Granary, 1918). *Shiika* (Poems and *Tanka*) was a magazine run by Bochō’s long-time acquaintance Maeda Yūgure (1883-1951), a tankaist of some renown.

30 For a detailed account of the Sendai episode, see Nakamura 1995, pp. 48-53. According to the autobiographical piece «Hanmen jiden» (A One-Sided Autobiography, 1916), Bochō had to leave Sendai in a hurry, carrying with him only a «little red book» (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 153), that is, F.P. Sturm’s English translations from Baudelaire.

«aestheticentrism».[31] To him, art is still the supreme value in a world otherwise marked by modern anomie: *fiat ars, pereat mundus*[32] (by bombings or arsons, or anything that serves the purpose).

5 Adding a Reactionary Flavour: Against the Blind Populace

Bochō's antagonistic stance was not only aimed at the literary establishment, but also tackled the 'popular' audience, the 'masses', which are the object of occasional feelings of aversion from him and other Ningyo Shisha members. Within the microphysical dimension of a marginal denomination (Ningyo Shisha or «prismism») in a marginal field (the so-called *shidan*, or *shi* scene) of literary production, Bochō's fantasy of empowerment therefore articulated a twofold battle against the established literary power and against the popular «taste of the day» (see Poggioli 1968, pp. 123-124).

As a rhetorical configuration, this latter trope required the existence of a linguistic object corresponding to the 'popular' and 'mass' audience. Against its ignorance, blindness, or dumbness, the scandal of the misunderstood revolutionary poet could take place.

The idea of a spiritual aristocracy, even if only implicitly, had been incorporated in the Japanese discourse of Symbolist and *décadent* poetry almost from its inception, and it was well represented, in the embodiment with which Bochō was better acquainted, by Kitahara Hakushū's magazines, such as *Okujō teien* (Roof Garden), *Zanboa* (Shaddock), *Chijō junrei* (Pilgrimage on Earth), and *Ars*.[33] In this discursive tradition, the aesthetic experience was conceived as something restricted to individuals of not ordinary sensibility.

Within Ningyo Shisha, Sakutarō absorbed such suggestions in the most notable way. This is shown by the general tone he attempted to give to *Takujō funsui*, starting from the well-known column in the second issue where, while explaining the name of the magazine (allusive in itself to the elitist cenacle-like nature of the group), he compared his coterie to the patricians of Rome: «We are noblemen (*kizoku*) in every moment. We study the refined customs of Roman nobles, who place a fountain of perfume on the table even when they dine. We are *luxurious*. Our hands are white

31 See, on this term and on the topic of «fascist aesthetics»: Cornyetz 2007, pp. 23-33.

32 Benjamin 1968, p. 242.

33 *Okujō teien* closed after only two issues (October 1909 and February 1910) mainly because of censorship issues. *Zanboa* enjoyed a longer life, from November 1911 to May 1913. In its last issue, Sakutarō had his first poem published. *Chijō junrei* (September 1914-March 1915) and *Ars* (April-October 1915) were launched at Hakushū's comeback after a temporary retreat. Bochō contributed significantly to both of them: his most controversial poem *Geigo* (Delirium, later included in *Seisanryōhari*) appeared for the first time in the June 1915 issue of *Ars*.

and smooth. We have never laboured in our life. And of this we are proud» (Hagiwara 1915, p. 16).[34]

Probably, Bochō, with his history of being a peasant and low-rank missionary, was not at ease with such exhibits of provincial dandyism (a trait to which Sakutarō was particularly prone). In fact, according to Bochō scholar Wada Yoshiaki (1968, p. 141), they accelerated his estrangement from the society. However, Bochō himself was not immune to such attitudes. Although, in his writings, the passages where he, as a missionary and a minister, expresses affection and solidarity towards the popular classes are overwhelmingly more frequent, in some of his texts of this period, it is possible to detect the insurgence of antidemocratic feelings. These can be partly attributed to the frustration he experienced after the failure of his prismist poetry but they are not devoid of the same elitist self-congratulation that can be found in many texts produced by European avant-garde artists (think of Marinetti’s «pleasure of being booed» or the «slap in the face of public taste» of the Russian Futurists) or the persecutory fantasies that can be traced back to the Symbolist/*décadent* trope of the *poète maudit*.

An article by Suzuki Suezō, an obscure *Fūkei* contributor and one of the few who publicly praised *Seisanryōhari*, is quite revealing, because it probably shows some degree of ideological proximity with Bochō’s own opinions in this respect. In his apologetic review of Bochō’s collection, «Yamamura Bochō-shi to *Seisanryōhari*» (Mr. Yamamura Bochō and *The Holy Prism*, *Shiika*, July 1916), Suzuki gives its being «too aristocratic» as the reason for its bad reception.

> So, at this time, *Seisanryōhari* is too aristocratic (*arisutokuratekku*) to be judged by today’s poetry scene. It does not have a hint of vulgar taste, and yet it is not something narrow-minded and antidemocracy (*demokurashī o mitomenai mono*): it is sacred aristocracy (*seikureddo arisutokurashī*). It is nobility (*kizoku*) at the top of simplicity and devotion. It goes forward as a guiding light. The devotion of the people (*minshū*) will necessarily attain Bochō’s footsteps. And when he steps forward again, the distance from the others will grow more and more and comprehension will become even more remote; the charges against him will gain even more strength (Quoted in Wada 1968, pp. 194-195).

Suzuki defines Bochō’s poetry by resorting to the *quasi*-oxymoronic category of a «sacred aristocracy» that, despite being aristocratic, simultaneously avoids an antidemocratic attitude: in other words, a spiritual and

34 Emphasis in the original. Also quoted in Wada 1968, p. 141. It is not clear if Sakutarō confused ancient Rome with India in this passage, as some suggest (see Itō 1979, p. 6).

ideal aristocracy that is not socially aristocratic. This is as contradictory a characterization («simultaneously A and not A») as that of the «fascist dream» (as defined in the wake of Slavoj Žižek) of having «capitalism without capitalism» (see Ivy 2009, p. viii; Tansman 2009, p. 29).

With his «guiding light» metaphor, Suzuki assigns to Bochō a leading position vis-à-vis the «people», who are necessarily destined to attain in the future what he has already achieved in the present. In other words, even if he does not seem to be fully aware of it, Suzuki puts Bochō in an *avant-garde position* in a way that the elitist and Romantic attributes connected to such condition are strongly emphasized.

However, Bochō did not share Suzuki's confidence that his poetry was destined to enjoy a following – at least, not in the following thousand or ten thousand years – as we have seen in his 'bomb letter'. The bad reception to his literary efforts prevented him from cherishing the ambition to present himself as a leader for the masses. If, in his discourse, he implemented a dichotomy between the «men of genius» and the «masses» that resembled that of Suzuki, it was more than anything in negative and conflicting terms.

For instance, a revealing word that appears frequently in his writings of this period is *gunmō* 群盲, which literally means 'a crowd of blind people', which can be associated with the idea of the 'illiterate/ignorant populace'.[35] Bochō often uses this word in attributive forms (*gunmō no* or *gunmōteki*), seemingly without pointing to any specific social class. It stands, transversally, for the absolute idiocy and blindness of those who do not understand (his) art. A revealing instance of the usage of this word among his Ningyo Shisha peers is found in a letter that Sakutarō sent to him in September 1914. The poet from Maebashi states that grasping the «metallic rhythm» of Bochō's poetry is an extremely difficult task for the «blind populace (*gunmō*) of this country» (*Hagiwara Sakutarō zenshū*, vol. 13, p. 58).

Before proceeding further, I would like to stress that Bochō tended to absolutize the perspective of a limited circuit of practitioners (in this case, the so-called *shidan*), something very similar to what Pierre Bourdieu called a

35 In «Shun'ya tsūshin» (Correspondence on a Spring Night, *Shiika*, April 1913; YBZ, vol. 4, p. 301), Bochō associates this word with its synonym *shūgu* ('the vulgar masses', which is attested in dictionaries in compounds such as *shūgu seiji*, 'ochlocracy'). Another interesting example of the usage of the word *gunmō* is in the diary of Tanaka Kyōkichi (1892-1915), a young artist of the group gathered around the magazine *Tsukuhae* (Moonglow), who later illustrated Sakutarō's *Tsuki ni hoeru* (1917). Commenting upon the sixth conservative State-sponsored Bunten art exhibition, Tanaka stated that he found «unbearable the spectacle of ignorant people (*gunmō*) praising works of no value» (16 October 1912; quoted in Tanaka 1990, p. 74). An artist of the same avant-garde group, Onchi Kōshirō (1891-1955), expressed in his diary (30 July 1915) the same resentment against the «crowd of fools» (*gujin no mure*) that oppress the individual (quoted in Tanaka 1990, pp. 201-202). For the record, *Gunmō* was also the title of a Japanese translation of Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Blind* (*Les aveugles*), published in 1914.

«subfield of restricted production, where producers have only other producers for clients (who are also their direct competitors)» (1996, p. 217). A few hundred copies of *Seisanryōhari* were printed.[36] We cannot realistically think that the «blind populace» (*gunmō*) that Bochō criticized for not understanding his work was anything larger than the tiny coteries (formed either by professionals or amateurs) who cared about *shi*; a genre that in Japan, at that time, was possibly the most marginal in terms of number of practitioners, size of its publishing market, and resonance of its critical discourse.[37]

A semantic shift is then at work in Bochō's usage of the *gunmō* image. In the process of articulating his protest, Bochō does not represent his antagonists as actual critics or *shidan* members, but as a generic throng that is linguistically determined as a discursive subject by its own obtuseness and inability to understand Bochō's poetry. The *gunmō* image works as a rhetorical figure that hyperbolically subsumes the opponents Bochō actually had within the *shidan*.

In December 1913, an «ignorant audience» (*gunmōteki kōshū*) (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 313) were those who supported the ideas of Kimura Shōhachi and his post-Impressionist colleagues, with whom Bochō was engaged in a literary debate.[38] In 1916, Bochō considered that it was against «compliance with the blind populace (*gunmō raidō*) and empty formality of customs» (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 361) that critic Sōma Gyofū (1883-1950), the «tragic disillusioned», had lost his battle for a new culture.[39] Antidemocratic feelings

36 Maybe even less, as information about the exact number of printed copies is scarce. Ningyo Shisha launched a subscription to print fifty copies of the special edition (*tokusei*), but it is not known if they were all printed. We do not have any figure regarding the standard edition (*namisei*). See Tanaka 1988, p. 338. In 2001, scholar and bibliophile Kawashima Kōki reported an evaluation of two million yens for a copy (with the original case) of the special edition (p. 9); this shows how rare the book is today.

37 *Tsuki ni hoeru*, which today is considered Sakutarō's masterpiece and one of the most important collections of *shi* of the 20th century, had a first run of just five hundred copies (Tanaka 1990, p. 256). According to a memoir by Saisei (quoted in Ichimura 1995, p. 41), two hundred copies per month of *Kanjō*, the literary magazine run by Sakutarō and Saisei, were printed from June 1916 to November 1919. The same figure was reported for *Tsukuhae*, the seminal art *dōjin zasshi* edited by Onchi Kōshirō and Tanaka Kyōkichi, which went largely unsold (Tanaka 1990, pp. 113, 145, 150). Bochō's *dōjin zasshi* were probably printed in even lower numbers.

38 «Senpaku-naru genjitsu kōtei o warau» (I Laugh at Your Shallow Affirmation of Reality), *Shiika*, December 1913. In this article, Bochō replied to the attacks orchestrated by the poet and journalist Hitomi Tōmei (1883-1974) against his collection *Sannin no otome*. Tōmei resented Bochō for having left Naturalism in order to move into the anti-Naturalist camp. The attacks comprised articles by Tōmei himself, Kawaji Ryūkō, Shirotori Seigo, Fukushi Kōjirō (1889-1946) and the young Kimura Shōhachi. «I Laugh at Your...» is generally regarded by Japanese scholars as an important stage in the formation of *Seisanryōhari*'s new poetics (Sugiura 1979).

39 «Hisō-naru genmetsusha» (The Tragic Disillusioned), *Shinrisōshugi* (New Idealism),

also resurfaced in the passages where Bochō anticipated the publication of *Le Prisme*. In his words, the new magazine was meant to express the true nature of the self «without falling ill with the *pride* of the masses (*gunshū*)» («Chōshi senpyō», *Shūsai bundan*, March 1916) (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 583, emphasis by Bochō).

The elitist overtones of Bochō's narrative reached their climax in «Shihin» (Poetical Genius), an essay originally published in *Le Prisme* in May 1916 and later included in the collection of prose writings *Chiisana kokusō yori* (From the Little Granary, 1918). In this essay, Bochō extols the ideal figure of the misunderstood man of genius who is rejected by the populace, declaring: «In our times, there are just egoists who are too small and mediocre to acknowledge genius and listen to its voice, and the ignorant populace (*gunmō*) who defend their idiocy by wielding their number in vain. This is the most despicable attribute brought by ideas of liberty and equality» (YBZ, vol. 4, pp. 168, 855).[40]

Writing to his disciple Hanaoka Kenji on 2 November 1916, in a moment when he could acutely perceive that all his ambitions linked to the prismist project were crushed, Bochō described himself as «surrounded by enemies on all sides as a poet», and, using the third person, he addressed a bitter retort to his country: «Ah, Japan, so rich in many high-spirited young men! O Japan, where things are decided by the blind majority (*gunmō no tasūketsu*)! But Bochō, he will never forsake his poetry» (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 671).

In elaborating such an unrealistic and nearly paranoid narrative, Bochō must have been attracted by the Symbolist and anti-Naturalist paradigm of the individual of genius. This required the inclusion in his discourse of the trope of the poet's alienation not only from the literary scene, but also from human society as a whole. In compliance with this paradigm, Bochō depicted his own alienation by a full display of tropes, such as the blind crowd (an outnumbering enemy, portrayed as the ally and supporter of a mediocre world of letters, or as overlapping with it), and, as a modernist means of reacting to that, the destructive violence of bombs and arsons.

Such images of destruction, however akin they are to the thematic stock of anarchist or avant-garde propaganda, still configure as their sole agent the post-Romantic individual of genius. This is portrayed in a solipsistic act of rebellion *for art's sake*, which is almost certainly doomed to have no choice but to «take submissively the blind (*gunmō no*) derision of people»

February and March 1916. «Genmetsusha» was written by Bochō in homage to Sōma Gyofū, the Naturalist critic whose sudden decision to leave the literary and academic world and retire in the countryside had provoked a deep emotion in the *bundan*. In this essay, Bochō claims that he had a strong bond with Gyofū during their university days (around 1904-1906), when both contributed to the *tanka* magazine *Shirayuri* (White Lily).

40 The text in *Chiisana kokusō yori* reads: «The ignorant populace that take as their point of reference a number of too mediocre and petty egoisms to acknowledge…».

(«Shōsoku», *Fūkei*, October 1914) (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 554). Therefore, these images only border what is generally considered as one of the characteristic tropes of modernist discourses, that of a palingenetic «creative destruction» as a means to attain a «total social regeneration».[41] Despite Bochō's effort to anchor these images of violent reaction against the literary establishment and the ignorance of the 'masses' to a (no less fictional) movement (prismism), they still appear neatly individualistic and «aestheticentric».

Bochō's egalitarian and pacifist education as a Christian tottered under the weight of a literary and personal failure, but it was not only that. The antidemocratic implications of the '*gunmō* discourse' also expose an ambiguous dialectic between the cultural producer and the 'masses' that is both Romantic (in its emphasis on the isolation of the individual who is bound to be misunderstood and persecuted for his art) and modernist (in the redemptive role played by technology-enhanced violence as a means to overcome it).

6 Conclusion

In socio-literary terms, in his position as an emerging *bungaku seinen* (young writer)[42] with a scarce endowment of starting capital, Bochō envisioned propelling his trajectory within the *bundan* by resorting to many different resources, both traditional and 'avant-garde'. Among the latter, aggressive propaganda that bordered symbolic terrorism. According to Pierre Bourdieu, terrorism can be considered a highly risky «strategy of despair» (2000, p. 228), as indeed, given the inertial configuration of the structures of power and the fact that those who tend to resort to this sort of terrorism are constitutionally deprived of symbolic capital, such attempts are often bound to fail or backfire (1996, pp. 261-263). This may well be the case with Bochō who was around thirty when he conceived *Seisanryōhari* and was ominously aware that his career, far from attaining consecration, was progressively spiralling down (as, in fact, it did).

Since they parallel the tactics of empowerment of a struggling writer, Bochō's narratives of violence and destruction reflect his initial ambitions (around 1914-1915) to vehemently impact the literary scene of Japan as an avant-garde author. From 1916, as his literary and editorial efforts met with failure, such images of destruction came to be increasingly tinged with frustration, resentment, or even despair. In other words, they evolved from

41 According to many commentators, the genealogy of this trope (and of the aesthetic overtones that connect it to a Symbolist background) comprises Friedrich Nietzsche's «active nihilism» and resonates in Georges Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* and F.T. Marinetti's «war, the sole cleanser of the world» (see Griffin 2007, pp. 152-153, 182). Griffin also notices the tropological association of modernism and anarchist terrorism (pp. 125-126).

42 This label was used by Bochō himself in «Hanmen jiden» (YBZ, vol. 4, p. 153).

being instrumental in the articulation of a *futural* narrative of empowerment to being instrumental in the articulation of a *retrospective* narrative of defeat. This narrative of defeat was both etiological, in that it tried to provide an explanation for past failures, and antidemocratic, in that it posited the blindness of people and the isolation of creative geniuses as among the main causes of such failures. Being chronologically and socially backward looking, this narrative may be characterized as reactionary.

Bochō resorted to hyperbolic referents («art world», «society», «the blind populace», etc.) and apocalyptic tropes («dynamite», «bombs», etc.) to depict his trajectory within what was in fact only a marginal sector of the literary field. This reveals the fantastic and fictional nature of these narratives as well as the attraction of contemporary discursive models coming from the European avant-garde movements.

Still, such tropes strike the reader for their intriguing likeness with those of the Italian Futurist writings. They call for reflection on the means by which literary protest was linguistically articulated at a time when literary discourse as a whole had become able to incorporate some by-products of local and transnational 'modernities'. These included technological (bombs, dynamite) and criminological devices (the arsonist as a felon and as a maniac, the terrorist, and the bomber, especially if an anarchist) that can be found as common elements to the Japanese and Western European contexts of those years.[43]

A minor or a premature avant-garde writer in his literary practice, Bochō was in the same way the bearer of a small-scale fantasy of destruction/regeneration that, in its aestheticized solipsism, was largely unable to create a long-lasting alternative to the sense of anomie he must have experienced regarding his position in the literary field.

Such position proved untenable in the end. By 1917, with the poems later included in the collection *Kaze wa kusaki ni sasayaita* (The Wind Has Whispered to the Plants), which expounded his own version of the then-thriving humanitarian and ruralistic 'popular poetry' (*minshūshi*), Bochō found himself a new niche in the Taishō literary market, and he abandoned any commitment to an avant-garde agenda.

43 In the French and Italian contexts, one is obviously reminded of the immense emotion provoked by the attacks by Ravachol (1892), Auguste Vaillant (1893), Émile Henry (1892 and 1894), Sante Caserio (1894), Luigi Lucheni (1898), Gaetano Bresci (1900) and of the (more ore less explicit) apologies of such actions expounded by intellectuals, such as those cited in Vance Thompson's *French Portraits*. See also Melchiori 1985, chapters 1-2. In Japan, there had been attacks against high-profile politicians, even if they were not always inspired by anarchist ideals. Among the more recent ones were those against Mori Arinori (1889) and Itō Hirobumi (1909). The picture comprises also the miners' revolt in Ashio (Ashio Bōdō Jiken, 1907) and, obviously, the 'High Treason Incident' of 1910-1911.

7 Appendix
Arguments, et clairon, et coups de poing: A Dubious Futurist Genealogy

Among the eristic options available for his symbolic struggle, Bochō chose the themes of violence and destruction. In this, he made a nearly unprecedented choice for the Japanese literary field, a choice that appears as one of the most ‘avant-garde’ elements in his writings. It can be said that this aspect resonates with a particular attitude of antagonism and rebellion that had been spread by books like Kimura Shōhachi’s, which, together with Futurist and Cubist proclamations and programs, had popularized in Japan the ‘esprit nouveau’ of a sector of the European intellectual field. Therefore, one may think that the presence of these elements in Bochō’s work could be traced back to a reception of a series of tropes that can be found in the manifestos of Italian Futurism. These tropes can be defined as variations on the image of the «destructive arm of the Anarchist» (1912, p. 4)[44] that was praised by Marinetti in article 9 of his famous first manifesto of 1909. As noted by Roy Starrs (2011, pp. 112-131), recent scholarship has discussed the fallacies of a too mono-directional search for ‘influences’ from ‘Western’ cultural production to Japan in order to account for the characteristics of Japanese modernism. However, the imbalance of material and symbolic power between the Japanese intellectual fields and those in Europe and North America is largely undeniable. While Japanese cultural journalism was eager to record and debate even the least new perturbations that were taking place in the cultural scenes of France, Germany, United States, Great Britain, or Russia (and in their peripheries, such as Italy), the same was not obviously happening in reverse. Accordingly, in the following section, I will try to illuminate, from an intertextual perspective and deliberately eschewing any heuristically unproductive commentary on the supposed originality or derivativeness of Bochō’s works, the intertextual connections between Bochō’s writings and Italian Futurist materials, as far as the tropes presented in the first part of this paper are concerned.

In an often-cited interview that he placed at the end of *Le Futurisme* (1911), a collection of essays and manifestos on Futurism, Marinetti himself reassured his readers about the provocative nature of his plans to «destroy the museums, the libraries» (1912, p. 4), as notoriously proclaimed in the first manifesto of the movement:

> [Marinetti]: If we had resorted to diplomatic language, if we had been very sensible, very gentle, we would not have provoked any echo. So-

44 When available, I will quote from the official English versions of Futurist manifestos because they were the best known in Japan. It is worth noting that the word ‘anarchist’ corresponds in the Italian version of this manifesto to *libertari* (libertarians) and in the French version to *anarchistes*.

me people are spineless and they need to be awakened by being hit. It is because we want to succeed that we swagger our way straight to the goal, that we violently place ourselves in opposition to ordinary taste and moderation. In fact, we invented nothing, and all we do is aggressively synthesize a range of feelings, of ideas that strived to be expressed. Futurism is nothing but the praise or, if you prefer, the exaltation of originality and personality.

[Interviewer]: The rest is nothing but arguments, isn't it?...

M: Arguments, and bugle, and punches! (*Arguments, et clairon, et coups de poing!*)

I: You aren't going to set fire to a library, are you?

M: To none!

I: You aren't going to flood a museum?

M: None![45]

Taken at face value or not, this interview is remarkable for the fact that Marinetti emphasizes the tactical function of the images of destruction, violence, arsons, and bombings that were disseminated in the Futurist propaganda at this early stage. In his words, they are mostly «arguments», that is, a set of linguistic and rhetorical devices. Such a definition rings even truer for the images of destruction employed by Bochō, who, unlike Marinetti, never associated himself with social or political action. I will attempt now to illustrate the dispersion of such «arguments» in the Japanese press in the years around the publication of *Seisanryōhari*.

Art critic Morita Kamenosuke (1883-1966) (KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, p. 289) touched on a topic similar to that of Marinetti's interview in the last instalment (September 1915) of his article «Taisei gakai shin undō no keika oyobi kyubizumu» (Trends of the New Movements in the Western Art World, and Cubism) featured in the prominent art magazine *Bijutsu shinpō* (Art Journal). Morita heavily borrowed from Arthur Jerome Eddy's influential *Cubists and Post-Impressionism* (1914), a book that, as we have already seen, had a significant circulation in Japan at that time, spearheading a mildly sympathetic reception of the latest avant-garde movements of Europe. In his article, Morita translated the following passage from Eddy's book:

> In an address recently delivered in London, the leader of Futurism warned his hearers not to accept too literally the startling extravagances of some of the Futurist manifestoes and literature. He stated frankly that many of the most violent propositions were uttered for the

45 «Marinetti interviewé par le 'Temps'» [14 March 1911], in Marinetti [1911] 1979, pp. 206-207. In the article «Miraiha no zekkyō» (The Cry of Futurism, *Yomiuri shinbun*, 5 March 1912), Takamura Kōtarō translated the *clairon* sentence, but he did not clarify its context (see *Takamura Kōtarō zenshū*, vol. 8, p. 4).

> purpose of arousing public attention to what they considered very real evils in our modern life. For instance, when the Futurists cry, «Down with all museums», «Destroy all remains of antiquity», they do not mean that if they were given the power they would do these things, but what they desire is to arouse Italy and the ancient world to the fact that Italy has a position as a *modern* nation (Eddy 1914, p. 188, emphasis in the original).[46]

Marinetti had to make such clarifications because part of the press, especially in the English-speaking world, was interpreting his destructive claims literally, and they went as far as to explicitly associate the Futurist movement with anarchist terrorism.[47] Among the several articles on this topic, «The New Crazy 'Exploding' Pictures by 'Art Anarchists'», published in the *Illustrated London News* in February 1912 and later reprinted in the *New York American* on 31 March 1912, elaborated on the motif of the bomb beside a colossal reproduction (covering nearly half of the page) of Gino Severini's *The 'Pan Pan' Dance at the Monico*:

> What do you think of the picture at the top of the page? It looks, you will say, like an «explosion»: like, in fact, an artistic bomb. Who throw bombs? Why, anarchists, of course. But the idea of anarchy is too tame for the painters of the school to which this painting belongs. They call themselves «The Post-Anarchists of Art», meaning that they are everything any anarchist is and then some more.[48]

The pairing of Futurism with political anarchism reverberated in Japan through these and other English-language materials. It began with the «Initial Manifesto of Futurism», which, as we have already seen, extolled «the destructive arm of the Anarchist», and with paintings, such as *Rebellion* (by Luigi Russolo) and *The Funeral of the Anarchist Galli* (by Carlo

46 It is unlikely that Bochō read Morita's article, but he knew Eddy's book. He translated a passage from the chapter «Esoragoto» in the aforementioned article «Kono geijutsu de aru» (January 1916). Moreover, cultural columnist Nakada Katsunosuke (1886-1945) quoted passages from *Cubists and Post-Impressionism* in two articles in the January and February 1915 issues of *Sōzō*. As we have already seen, Bochō was a regular contributor to this magazine. Nakada also presented a translation of the very first pages of the book in the *Yomiuri shinbun* (7 August 1915: «Shingeijutsu ni kanshite» [On the New Art]; KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, p. 324). In all these cases, however, the name of the American critic and the title of his book went uncredited. A partial translation of the book by Kume Masao was released in September 1916 as *Rittaiha to kōki inshōha* (Cubism and Post-Impressionism).

47 See Burke 1986, pp. 67-70, for a survey centred on the US press.

48 This article can be retrieved in the Marinetti's *Libroni* online database, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Also quoted in Burke 1986, p. 68.

Carrà), which were both reproduced in the catalogues of the Bernheim-Jeune and Sackville exhibitions of 1912.[49]

The label of «anarchists of the art world» is echoed in articles by Hasegawa Tenkei (1876-1940) and Yosano Hiroshi, which, around the same period, presented the Futurist movement to the Japanese readers.[50] In other cases, the Futurists were more generically connected to «syndicalism», often with an implicit reference to its anarchist and revolutionary version.

Therefore, we must stress that the connection of the anarchist doctrines with Futurism, however incorrectly or superficially emphasized in the press of the period, was relatively well known in the Japanese intellectual field.[51]

It is possible that, independently of his knowledge of Futurist propaganda, Bochō might have somehow nurtured an awareness of the political (and, in some cases, the terroristic) practices connected to the international anarchist movement; he may have found in them a source for a series of discursive objects (the terrorist attack, dynamite, arson, sabotage, etc.) that punctuated his polemic discourse. I will try, however, to examine if and how the more specific discursive configurations of *futurism as an instance of anarchism* and of *anarchism as an instance of futurism* can be connected to Bochō's statements about bombings and arson.

As a critical exercise, I will try now to verify the textual genealogy of a single specific image, that of the arsonist (*hōka hansha*). It seems that Bochō had no reading skills of any foreign language except English (and that was not impeccable) (Wada 1976, p. 77; Nakamura 1995, pp. 87-88). Therefore, if he came to know about Futurist materials, it must have been through Japanese or English texts or through the mediation of someone who could understand Italian or French. According to the state of the research on this point, he might have known the following materials.

It is not known if Bochō knew the original text of the aforementioned «Initial Manifesto of Futurism», which in the Sackville catalogue urges the «good incendiaries with their charred fingers» to «set fire to the shelves of the libraries» (Marinetti 1912, pp. 5-6). Kimura Shōhachi provided a translation of this version of the manifesto in his *Miraiha oyobi rittaiha no*

49 The first was held in Paris from 5 to 24 February 1912, the second in London from 1 to 31 March 1912. On the circulation of these two catalogues in Japan, see Ōtani 1992; Tanaka 2002.

50 Hasegawa Tenkei, «Shōraiha no kaiga tenrankai» (The Exhibition of Paintings of the Futurist School), *Bunshō sekai* (The World of Letters), June 1912 (now in KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, pp. 17-23). Yosano Hiroshi, «Fyuchurisuto no geijutsu» (Futurist Art), from the collection *Pari yori* (From Paris, May 1914), now in *Tekkan Akiko zenshū*, vol. 10, pp. 207-211.

51 Post-Impressionist artists like Takamura Kōtarō (1883-1956) and Hiroshima Kōho (1889-1951) had already claimed the label of anarchists in some of their 1910s writings. However, they did not resort to images of violence; to them, who were imbued with post-Impressionist and anti-Naturalist mythologies of the self, 'anarchism' was more than anything synonymous with absolute creative freedom (see Tanaka 1997, p. 168).

geijutsu (The Art of Futurism and Cubism, March 1915), a book that Bochō personally owned (Inoue 1988, p. 33; Tanaka 1988, p. 191):

> Soko de, nanraka koto o suru te o motte yoki sendōsha wa kita no dearu… kita no dearu… Toshokan no noki ni hi o tsukeru ga ii! (KSGS-K, vol. 1, p. 278)[52]

> There have arrived the good agitators with their hands that can do anything… there have arrived… What a good thing it is to set fire to the eaves of the libraries!

This is an inaccurate rendition where, albeit the idea of setting fire to libraries is conveyed, the original word for «incendiaries» was translated with its metaphorical meaning of «agitators» (*sendōsha*). In the same way, when Kimura translates a previous passage where Marinetti defines his manifesto as a «manifesto of violence, destructive and incendiary», he renders «incendiary» as «sendōteki-naru» (literally, 'agitatory', 'seditious') (KSGS-K, vol. 1, pp. 84, 276). Such choices sensibly weaken the possibility of a direct lexical influence of this translation on Bochō's *hōka hansha* image.

In this book, Kimura also gives a summary of the Futurists' political ideas. They are depicted as «from time to time ardent nationalists, anarchists, nihilists, or socialists», whose «ideal of life is a succession of destructions» (KSGS-K, vol. 1, pp. 285-286).

According to Futurism scholars (Gioè 1987; Cammarota 2002), another Futurist manifesto that features the trope of the arsonist, «Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna!» / «Tuons le clair de lune!» (Let's Kill Off the Moonlight!, 1909) was not available in Japanese or English before 1917. Moreover, there is no mention of it in the Japanese periodicals about Futurism collected in KSGS-SZ (vols. 1-2). Despite the inclusion of this manifesto in *Le Futurisme* (a book that, as can be inferred from Kimura Shōhachi's and Takamura Kōtarō's writings of this period,[53] circulated among the post-Impressionist coteries in Tokyo), it seems that Bochō didn't know about it, as he did not about *Le Futurisme*.

52 This translation is also included in *Geijutsu no kakumei* (KSGS-K, vol. 1, p. 86). As far as I know, this is the first Japanese translation of this part of the manifesto. Previous translations were limited to its eleven articles. Another translation of this passage, where «incendiaries» is rendered as «sendōsha», appeared in the article «Miraiha banzai» (Hurray for Futurism!), *Yomiuri shinbun*, 25 December 1914 (KSGS-SZ, vol. 1, p. 246).

53 It is reported that Kōtarō had directly written to Marinetti in 1909, during or shortly after a study trip to Europe. Parts of *Le Futurisme* are rephrased in his article «Miraiha no zekkyō» (see above). As for Kimura and his younger colleague, Uryū Yōjirō, I know no explicit account of their contacts with this book, but since Marinetti regularly sent materials to them for some time after they wrote to him in 1912 (see Tanaka 2002, for more details), it is highly probable that they got a courtesy copy of it directly from the Futurist leader.

Other passing references to the arsonist trope in the Futurist discourse are probably too watered down and oblique to have impressed Japanese readers. This is the case of Sakuma Kanae’s «Miraishugi undō» (The Futurist Movement, *Teikoku bungaku* [Literature of the Imperial University], January 1914),[54] where the Futurists’ attitude is said to reveal «the restlessness of an arsonist (*hōkasha*) who is starting a fire by using petroleum» (p. 83).

Finally, Bochō’s inflammatory tropes may recall Futurist poet Aldo Palazzeschi’s verses on similar themes, such as those that can be found in the poem «L’incendiario» (The Arsonist) from his collection that bears the same name (1910). However, as far as is known, no translation of this poem in English or Japanese was available before 1917, nor was the original covered in the Japanese cultural press. Despite Yosano Hiroshi’s knowledge of some of Palazzeschi’s verse (as shown by *Rira no hana*), it is therefore quite unlikely that Bochō knew about the works of this Italian poet.

Thus, despite their rhetorical similarities, I was not able to find conclusive evidence to posit a *direct* textual influence of the specific Futurist image of the arsonist on Bochō’s writings. This study does not explore this issue in its entirety, but, as a provisional conclusion, it may be said that Bochō came to conceive some of the images of destruction and violence found in his writings of the so-called ‘prismist period’ independently from the *direct and punctual* influence of Futurist texts known at that time in Japan and to him personally.

Abbreviations

KSGS-K = Hidaka, Shōji; Omuka, Toshiharu (eds.) (2003). *Kaigai shinkō geijutsuron sōsho: Kanpon hen*. 12 vols. Tōkyō: Yumani Shobō.

KSGS-SZ = Hidaka, Shōji; Omuka, Toshiharu (eds.) (2005). *Kaigai shinkō geijutsuron sōsho: Shinbun zasshi hen*. 10 vols. Tōkyō: Yumani Shobō.

YBZ = *Yamamura Bochō zenshū* (1989-1990). 4 vols. Tōkyō: Chikuma Shobō.

54 A translation of Massimo Dell’Isola, «Poche parole intorno al Futurismo» (A Few Words on Futurism), *Rivista d’Italia*, February 1913.

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